



# THE Music of Orient and Occident

Essays towards mutual understanding

BY  
MARGARET E. COUSINS  
*Bachelor of Music*



MADRAS  
B. G. PAUL & CO., PUBLISHERS  
12, FRANCIS JOSEPH STREET  
1935

Rs. 2/-



## PREFACE

DURING my twenty years' residence in India (1915-35) I have, every now and then, as the spirit moved me, contributed articles to the Indian Press on various subjects which were topically and contemporaneously interesting to myself and the public. One of these subjects was Music, and a little packet of copies of such musical articles, and notes of lectures that I had delivered had been accumulating in a folder, without any fixed object.

Unexpectedly a period of enforced withdrawal from the activities of my ordinary busy life gave me the opportunity of looking through these articles, and this book is the result, through the kind appreciation of my publishers.

The volume is confessedly a compilation, and as such is bound to be something in the nature of patchwork. It cannot have a plan leading to a climax. It has not the classical form of a Sonata or a Krithi; it is more like a Suite or a Ragamalika. It has the characteristics of journalism rather than of an exhaustive treatise, a serious study, or a book with a purpose, yet it is a reflection of life at first-hand developing its self-expression in Oriental and Occidental civilizations. It is written by one who has studied and loved the Muse of Music in her various languages, and its authenticity of living experience, and its devotion to Music as an international pathway to world-harmony, may make it acceptable and useful to the general public for whose sake it has been kept as non-technical as possible.



In spite of unavoidable overlappings and repetitions due to its journalistic genesis and its special exposition of Indian music, I am venturing to give these sparks struck off the flint of Time a more permanent form than the evanescence of newspaper or periodical publication because there is so little information about Oriental music available in English (generally speaking musicians are not writers, and writers are not musicians). Also there have been very few Western musicians who have lived long enough in the East, and particularly in India, to have learnt to appreciate the science and the beauty of systems different from their own, nor are there many who wish to help Easterners to understand the peculiar genius of Western music. These chapters may help each, and may stimulate someone to write a more adequate work on the subject than this collection can be. Despite the shortcomings of the chapters, I hope that their interior evidence will illustrate how the art of music is developing. The chronological order of their original appearance has been kept, and thus, especially as regards India, they are a running commentary on the rapid changes taking place in music in India.

I am convinced that what we may roughly consider the music of the two hemispheres is complementary, just as are their civilizations and their outlooks on life and its problems. I cannot desire a fusion of the two. I keep an ear for each, and enjoy each in its appropriate setting. But the world is becoming so accessible to everyone that perhaps a person in the near future will choose his or her country according to temperamental affinities (including the special kind of music) rather than by birth.

## PREFACE

I offer to the Goddess of Music this humble endeavour to promote mutual appreciation between East and West through the medium of sweet sound.

‘Many the songs, and the singers,  
But song at its heart is one.’

*November, 1935*

M. E. C.



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE ... ..	iii
I. INTERNATIONALISM IN MUSIC ... ..	1
II. MUSIC AND LIFE ... ..	12
III. THE MUSIC OF HINDUSTAN ... ..	18
IV. THE TRAINING OF THE EMOTIONAL NATURE ...	30
V. THE NATIONAL VALUE OF MUSIC ... ..	38
VI. THE VALUE OF MUSIC IN EDUCATION ... ..	44
VII. INDIA'S GIFT OF SONG ... ..	54
VIII. INDIA'S ORCHESTRA ... ..	64
IX. THE MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGIN OF WESTERN MUSIC ... ..	72
X. THE BEGINNINGS OF WESTERN MUSIC ... ..	80
XI. THE MAN MAKES THE MUSIC ... ..	89
XII. A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EASTERN AND WESTERN MUSIC ... ..	96
XIII. A HISTORIC MUSICAL EVENT ... ..	107
XIV. SNATCHES OF SOUTH INDIAN MUSIC ... ..	112
XV. VOICE AND INSTRUMENT ... ..	121
XVI. INDIAN MUSIC IN MADRAS ... ..	131
XVII. RUSSIAN MUSIC ... ..	137
XVIII. THE KING OF VEENA PLAYERS ... ..	149
XIX. Scriabine ... ..	157
XX. THE FIRST INDIAN GRADUATE IN MUSIC ...	169
XXI. MUSIC IN INDIA IN 1935 ... ..	175
XXII. MUSIC IN DIFFERENT ASIAN COUNTRIES ...	190



# The Music of Orient and Occident

## CHAPTER I

### INTERNATIONALISM IN MUSIC

And our singing shall build  
In the void' loose field  
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield.

*Prometheus*—Shelley

So ignorant have Western musicians been of the existence of a great world of music in Asia different from their own that they have looked upon and defined music as a 'Universal Language'. But ask any European how he liked Indian or Chinese music when he toured in the East, and he will say it was boring to the last degree and conveyed nothing to him; and ask any Oriental how he liked Western music and he will confess that it was nothing but a confusion of sounds to him—noisy and without sweetness.

In all countries of the world music is recognised as the 'language of the emotions', and emotions are similar in all races. Joy, sorrow, yearning, hatred, love, sweep the gamut of life in like manner in East and West, and express and perpetuate themselves in the music of yellow, brown, and white beings with equal spontaneity. Is there no way then of forming national *ententes* through the realius of the emotions which are such common factors? Can music perform an international service of promoting universal kinship? Judging by ordinary experience connected with the lack of mutual appreciation or understanding of musicians belonging to

the Indian, the Chinese, and the Western systems of music, one might think that music would prove only an added stumbling-block to unity; but events that have happened lately in the music world give us fresh heart of hope that Eastern and Western civilizations may yet draw nearer to one another through their mutual service of give-and-take in musical knowledge and enjoyment.

If there is to be any successful advance in the growth of internationalism there must be mutual understanding between the various existing nations. Understanding arises from some bases of intercommunication and some medium of exchange of ideas. Space used to be a seemingly impassable barrier to such mutual knowledge, but space, time and expense will soon be negligible because of the shrinking of the world's distances by means of aerial motion. Then the agency of the eye and ear will remove many of the prejudices of ignorance between nations.

Multiplicity of languages forms a still more difficult barrier to internationalism. Ambition to rise to heaven by the steps of a vast tower caused the Tower of Babel of the Bible to be well named 'Confusion of tongues', and the curse of hundreds of different mother-tongues still prevents that mutual understanding which would bring about such a state of unity as might reach a new Heaven and construct a new Earth. Yet even now there is a universal medium of inter-communication, namely *sounds* of a certain gamut produced for speech in a similar way all over the world. It is the *combinations* of these materials of speech which are so dissimilar and so manifold that members of different nations entirely fail to understand one another's speech and

ideas. Without the mediumship of a common language and a common script world kinship will never be established. In its desire to establish friendly relations everywhere the Time-Spirit is making vast and far-reaching experiments with Esperanto, English, Hindi, shorthand, the Roman script, gesture speech, etc., but these are only beginnings. At present the speaking voice is as much a hindrance as a help to the rapid spread of international unity. The singing voice has made greater victories (one thinks of Chalapine, Caruso, Melba), but only in the Western hemisphere, where the melodic material is the same for all the countries.

By means of the script of musical symbols, and by means of the uniformity of the combinations of sounds used as the Western scales, music in the Western world has overleapt the barriers of nationality, and Russian, Spanish, American, and other Western races are all able to react appropriately to the emotional evocation produced by music representative of any of these countries.

It is the absence in India of a common notation and the existence of a bewildering number of scale combinations (ragas) that creates the great barrier to the interchange of musical ideas and delights between the West and the East, and also between the various nations of the Orient itself. In India there is a growing desire for experimentation in achieving a notation which shall be common to all the races in this great sub-continent. At present the Tamils, the Telugus, the Canarese, the Bengalis, the Muhammadans, the Marathis, and a dozen other peoples as distinctive as the different European nations, write their music in a tonic-sol-fa kind of script, each in its own language-script character, each as unintelligible to the other as the Russian script is to the



English reader. It happens, however, that the eye is a much less common medium of musical knowledge in the East than in the West; it is the ear that has been the transmitter of musical knowledge in the East from generation to generation and from race to race.<sup>5</sup> It can do this because the musical material of India, vast as it is, is as common to all parts of India as are the major and minor scales to the West. All the available combinations and permutations of the twelve semitones which form the international basis of all music had been classified, named, identified with their appropriate times, seasons, and emotions, centuries before Palestrina with his inspired gestures pointed out the way of development to Western music. There are the seventy-two root seven-toned scales; the hundreds of derivative 'gapped' or fewer-toned scales; and the thousands of melody-moulds built on all these which are the traditional heritage of musical material of India, all of which have their own beauty and their own gifts of emotional expression to offer to the seeker.

It will interest Western musicians to know that thirty-six of these root scales are formed with the perfect fourth and thirty-six with the augmented fourth from the keynote. Amongst the former the most popular and common in South Indian music is C, D flat, E, F, G, A flat, B, C, called *Mayamalavagaula* because it has the nature of fascination which all Maya (Illusion) possesses. Another favourite is C, D flat, E, F, G, A, B flat, C. The scale used to express merriment and associated with all marriage festivities is C, D, E, F sharp, G, A, B, C.

If the West is ever to understand the East it must study the artistic expression of the latter as much as its philosophical and social expressions. Can East and

West ever meet in musical appreciation? Yes. How can they do so? By intellectual study, by external aids, and by a *yoga* (spiritual discipline) which will draw its music from the Inner Source from which all music has welled forth. Are there signs that this is happening? Many indeed, and they give promise of the laying of foundations of Peace between the nations of the world deeper than the League of Nations, for the interchange of gifts of Art is the ground-bass for a melody which springs from the heart and not the head, and for a harmony of mutual relationships whose key-note is impersonal enjoyment, not national exploitation. 'Captive Greece led captive her rude conquerors' but yesterday, condemned Russia dominates European art to-day, subject India will lavish royal gifts of culture on the world tomorrow.

The West has for some time been straining its ears to catch fresh musical and rhythmic inspiration from the Orient. One remembers the popularity of 'Indian Love Lyrics' by Amy Woodforde-Finden, the 'Persian Garden' of Liza Lehmann, the 'Chinese Songs' of Bantock; earlier still the 'Geisha' and the 'Mikado'. But these and other more ambitious efforts, such as Holst's 'Hymns from the Rig-Veda', are not the authentic thing. They are instead Eastern music as Westerners imagine, or wish, it to be. Lack of detailed information on the Eastern systems probably accounts largely for the travesties of the real thing. A great advance however has been achieved in portraying true Eastern music by Mr. Henry Eichheim in his 'Oriental Impressions for Orchestra' based on long residence in the Far East. Notwithstanding the 150 years' residence in India of large numbers of British people only five of them have

published accounts of the music of the country, while only as many Indians have written similarly in English as expounders of their art for the benefit of the outside world. And even of these many books are out of print, such as the works on music of Rajah S. M. Tagore and the life-work of A. Chinnaswamy Mudaliar—*The Regeneration of Oriental Music*, which proved the *Open Sesame* to the writer of this article into South Indian music, and inferentially into Hindustani music as well. Our musical internationalists must have these valuable writings reprinted in revised forms to meet the growing demand for information on the subject, as those which are available are very slight, with the exception of A. H. Fox-Strangway's *Music of Hindostan*. A Y.M.C.A. organiser, the Rev. H. A. Popley, has compiled a most useful and instructive book called *The Music of India*, which, while it has not the literary and Eastern charm of Coomaraswamy's *Essays* or the spiritually interpretative illumination of Miss Maud Macarthy's brochures, is yet full of the sincerity of the true 'amateur' who lays his painstaking accumulation of facts on the altar of the Muse he loves for the helping of humanity.

In these writings are to be found accounts of the thirty-five Indian time-signatures in Indian music, of which those containing 5, 7, 10, 14 beats in a bar are the most common. Also a Westerner gains from them ideas of the differences that exist in Eastern music with regard to the absence of harmony, modulation, accent, change of mood, nuance and colour. One gets from them some contact with the background of legend, of intermediate history, of the present state of Eastern music. The number of musical instruments described alone expand one's consciousness as to the possibilities

of adding to the present tone-colour of the Western orchestra. The differences in subject-matter and in the ideals connected with music in the East form a commentary in themselves on the elements of Eastern culture as contrasted with Western.

Such books form bridges across which musical pioneers in composition and interpretation may march into one another's temperamental countries and spread melodious news around. This book is intended to do the same.

The gramophone has a not unworthy *dharma* (duty) to play in this drama of mutual unfoldment. Remarkably good records of Indian, Chinese, Javanese and Western music by the best musicians of each country are now to be had, and by getting the ear accustomed to the strange sounds (the mind being held quiet by reason of having previously made itself acquainted with the theoretical elements of the system), a whole new world of musical expression in timbre, tone, nuance and rhythm is opened up respectively to East and West. Why, even a passing knowledge of the wealth of musical material belonging to the East, and yet unthought of by the West, makes one feel that we are still only on the threshold of the realm of musical development. One thrills to think of what the future holds for the world when Orpheus and Saraswati, the Occidental god and Oriental goddess of Music, give a combined recital with an understanding world for audience.

With these external aids as preliminary grounding it would behove the League of Nations, the Boy Scouts Jamborees, the Peace Societies, the Bahaists, International Fellowships, the Theosophical Society, and all organizations which work for the brotherhood of man,

to institute means for the exchange of the best artists of each country as interpreters of the Soul of the nations.<sup>1</sup> India, for example, is never visited by any of the first-class musicians of Europe. Mischa Elman recently included Japan in his world tour, and ravished the hearts of the Japanese, but he never touched the shores of India, nor did Caruso or Melba, Ysaye, or any of the good opera companies. And on the other hand, who has invited any of the great singers or instrumentalists of India to visit the West? These should not be ordinary commercial undertakings; they should be the propaganda of universal kinship. The Arts have not yet been recognised as the handmaids of world peace; they are looked on as the creations of peace, whereas they can become the creators of peace as soul comes in touch with soul through the medium of Beauty.

There is another remarkable line along which Western music is rapidly moving towards an *entente* with Indian music, namely, the modes which are being introduced as new into the former, but which study of Indian music shows us to be among the oldest sound-material used by the Aryan race. Musical research proves more and more that if Greek and Egyptian music were not derived from the root stock of Indian music, then there must have been some forgotten race which acted as musical parent to all three. The old Greek modes are all found in common use amongst Indian musicians. Since A.D. 1600 Western music limited their usage to the major and minor modes only (a miserable 3 out of the 72 classified and known, and the 20 commonly used modes in India), but Russia, through the Greek Church and

<sup>1</sup> This article was written in 1922; the first International Music Conference was held in 1933 in Florence.

the folk-songs, had retained the old modes and now is re-establishing them in Western ultra-modern music, thus making the way easy for a rapprochement between East and West.

Furthermore, there is the research made by adventurous musical spirits into the scientific laws of sound. This is getting to the root principle of the natural harmonics of any sound and from these is building up what in the West is considered a new tonality and system. It is noticeable that it has been those composers who have intuitionally and sympathetically identified themselves with Nature who have found themselves driven to self-expression in a new musical formula. Debussy is one of these—with his whole-tone scale which is identical with a derivative of the Indian scale C, D, E, F sharp, G sharp, A sharp, C (named *Rishabhapriya*). So similar is the source of his inspiration to that of the Indian *ragas* that his pieces have surrounded themselves with their own appropriate times and seasons, and to a sensitive performer refuse to express themselves save at those affined times. If one tries, for instance, to play his 'La Lune sur le temple qui fut' on a bright morning it becomes a dismal failure; or conversely, how the effect is heightened if one plays 'Les jardins sous la pluie' when rain is gently falling rather than when a wind-storm is driving all before it! This is the meeting of East and West along the pathway of aesthetic correspondences.

A still more striking unification of the two systems is to be discovered in the scale which Scriabine, the Russian Theosophist composer, introduced to Western musicians, and used as the tonal material of his latest and greatest compositions. As a student of Theosophy

and occultism, and especially of H. P. Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, he realised that there is region in which all things exist as ideas, then a lower region in which vibratory motion becomes their clothing. Vibration and sound are synonymous to those who have ears that can hear. From this Sound-substance forms are called forth by an imperative sound. 'In the beginning was the Word', . . . 'And God Said, Let there be light, and there was light.' It was this region of Sound-substance that Scriabine reached in his concentration or *yoga*, and it impressed itself on him as the scale C, D, E, F sharp, G, A, B flat, C, and in his explanation of his adoption of this scale he equates it consciously with the passive Mother from whom he can create emotional form through evocation. On the moment of first learning this fact the writer looked up the table of Indian scales and found the identical combination of sounds classified under the name *Vachaspattya*. An immediate reference to the *Secret Doctrine* disclosed that that name referred to the plenum of space, to the *Akasha*, material cause of sound; that as echo of that fact the Samskrt encyclopedia is named *Vachaspattya*; that the term itself in Samskrt means 'Female Lord of Sound' derived from Vach, Mystic Speech, Mother of All Living! Scriabine did not know the South Indian musical system but by subjective illumination this modern musician-seer unknowingly contacted, and applied, identically the same tonal sequence as was similarly named, classified and understood, centuries ago by the Rishi-musicians of India. Not only in the realm of tonality but also in the realm of corresponding forces is Scriabine closing the circle of musical internationalism between East and West. Not only through the addition of colours and perfumes but

through times, seasons, moods, Devic rulership and visualised thought-forms in living pictures will music adequately express emotion, and, as the supreme internationalist Rabindranath Tagore expresses it, 'In the mystery of these we shall not only make our whole nature articulate, but also understand man in all his attempts to reveal his innermost being in every age and clime'.



## CHAPTER II

### MUSIC AND LIFE

When I sing to make you dance, my child, then truly I know why there is music in leaves, and why the waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth,—when I sing to make you dance.

Tagore

THE power to express our feelings in sweet sounds, the power to hear the music of others and the melodies of Nature, are free gifts of the Creator to Humanity. To every man, woman and child is freely given the marvellous instrument of song—the throat, the larynx, the reed in the throat, the air from the breath, the sound chamber of the mouth and palate, the tongue, the lips, the nose, the whole intricate mechanism of the human voice. Through it, in the folk-song of primitive people, in the chanties of sea-farers, in the devotional chants and songs of monks and sadhus, bhaktas, nuns and evangelists, in the romances and serenades of the troubadours and ballad-makers, in the poets of the Orient, in the complex art of great choruses, a medium has existed for the expression of every shade of human emotion.

The structure of the head of the human being shows that Mother Nature intended her progeny to be musicians. Music is a human birthright just as are sight and hearing and tasting. The singing voice of human beings is the fundamental instrument of the orchestra of Life, given to us without money and without price, built into our house of Life even as today radio apparatus is part

of the equipment of the newest American houses and apartments.

In these modern days enough attention is not paid to the individual voice as the medium of emotional self-expression. In Oriental countries the voice is the basis of all musical expression. In Europe and America how few proportionately are those who have their voices trained as compared with those who have their hands trained to play some instrument external to their own physical equipment! Mechanical inventions, such as the radio and the gramophone are further reducing the numbers of those who give time to individual training as singers or instrumentalists. But human nature demands music for the nourishment of its nervous, aesthetic, emotional body as much as it demands food for its physical body. Consequently music is a factor of the life of civilised, and less civilised nations.

From the Lullaby in the cradle to the Funeral March en route to the grave music is our never-failing companion in all races and countries. It may be spontaneous, primitive folk-song as in India where agricultural tasks are performed to the number of repetitions of the song by the workers. It may be the sea-ditties of those who go down to the sea in ships. It may be the chant of the priest or the hymn of the devotee. It may be the chorus of miners or the orchestra of picked instrumentalists, or the virtuoso soloists of grand opera, but Life's necessity for music is everywhere evident.

There is music, too, suitable to the different levels of taste and culture of the hearers. People who love tripe and onions, hot curries and mutton, will enjoy jazz music and Hindustani love songs; those who love Nature and romance will enjoy Debussy and Wagner, Schubert

and Gitams; those with intellectual and philosophical minds will call for Bach and Beethoven, Kabir, and Tukaram, and the devotional will attend the great Masses and Oratorios and revel in the Kirthanams of Thyagaraja.

Music has its place in life as an art, as a science and as a pathway to transcendental experience. In its power to please, to refine, to demonstrate skill in the creation of form and to evoke emotion it is truly one of the Muses, the most magical of all the arts, the product of Will, ether and vibration. As the resultant of irrevocable laws of physics, of formulae of stress and strain, of wave-lengths and 'Cladhni's figures' and 'Cortes' fibres', vibrations and self-reproduction (as on gramophone records and through radio apparatus), and of laws of composition, it is a science. Through its identity with the genesis of the Desire of the Absolute, or God, or the Cosmic consciousness, to enjoy itself in manifestations of its own power, it is transcendental in its nature and can act as a ladder whereby the spiritually minded can ascend to the higher reaches of consciousness and through song enter into the Source of Song.

More and more is music entering into the life of all people. It is no longer the luxury of the rich. The broadcasting stations supply music to the millions. Time and space seem almost non-existent in conveying music of any description from one country to another. It is therefore becoming the more urgent that people should recognise the effect of music on the individual and social organism. At present students of music in its psychological aspect are only groping about in the dark. We know that it can send people to sleep (what would mothers do without lullabies?) that it can stimulate to

action (what would armies do without marches?), that it can arouse eroticism, that it can heal, that it can afflict, that it can efface the sense of the personal, that it can promote great unity amongst a very mixed crowd, that it can give comfort to the sorrowful and depressed, that it can increase the pleasure of the light-hearted or frivolous, that it can bear on its wings the aspiring to the very gate of Heaven and intoxicate them with the Divine Ananda. Should it then not be cultivated by all people *more self-consciously*, should it not be analysed, observed as to its effects, used for specific purposes of emotional control and character-building, much more than it has been in the present day?

Music is the oldest of the Arts in the Orient; it is the youngest of the arts of the Occident. The Vedas of India are the oldest writings extant. They are written in poetic form. In India all poetry is created in definite musical melody. Therefore music is already demonstrated as one aspect of the oldest recorded expressions of the human mind. But still more remarkable—one of the books of the Vedas is devoted to the exposition of the subject of Music, showing that even in those remote ages it was an Art of long and high development. In India the science treating of Gandharvaveda (Music) comprises three different branches of study, vocal music, instrumental music and dance music, and serves manifold purposes. Its ultimate goal is 'the worship of God or the Gods on the one hand, and the realisation of unrippled self-consciousness on the other.'

There is in India a whole school of devotees who look on music as a transcendental subject and who use the medium of Sound for the attainment of eternal bliss. These are of two cults, the Gnanayogins and the Geeta

Bhaktayogins. The former use the Pranavopasana and the latter the Geetopasana. The former believe that the First Cause, Brahman, who is Bliss, embodied that Bliss in its first expression of itself, the Creative Sound, AUM (a parallel tenet is the Christian expression 'In the beginning was the Word' . . . 'and God Said'). They believe therefore that all Sound is Divine in nature and that through the efficacy of Sound, especially musical sound, mankind can achieve self-realisation, in other words, identity with the cosmic self, Samadhi, 'the constantly realised blissful state'. There is a complete science of this Pranavopasana. It is as far removed from the ordinary study and aims of music as is jazz from the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. A graduate in such 'Aumkara' 'is enabled to live in a state of ever-enduring unalloyed blissfulness because he beholds the highest manifestation of Brahman (the Creator) '*. . . in every sound he hears.*' The Bhaktayogin devotee, whose technique for Liberation is Love, love of God transcendental and immanent, in all stages of his concentration employs geetam, song, as a pre-eminent medium of self-concentration. 'When he utters words by the mouth, they come out automatically set to music as it were. When he muses, you can see him musicing to himself. His music may not be similar to that of the so-called scholar. But nevertheless there is music in every word which proceeds from his mouth, in every idea he expresses, and in every gesture he makes; and this is real music because it lulls the hearers into a true repose.'

These people, as also Christian mystics of old, and to a lesser degree certain evangelical revivalists of today, use Song 'as an essential means of centralising their

spiritual thoughts and as an assured source of bliss to themselves and to their following.'

It is logical that India should be the one country in the world where music in its connection with and expression of Life should be so aware of the spiritual service of music. In India life is religion and religion is life. Until the advent of the Muhammadans into India there was no 'secular' type of music. In South Indian music all the themes are still religious only and a music-party is more like a prayer-meeting than an entertaining concert. An Indian writer is very outspoken when he writes : 'It is the conventional aspect of music which engages the world at large. The transcendental aspect of music belongs to the realm of Aryan culture alone. Other nations have not yet been able to reach perfection in music as either an art or a science, and it may take centuries for them to sight the foreshadowings of this transcendental phase.'

Every day science is showing us more and more plainly that we live and move and have our being in an ocean of musical sound. So far we have discovered the reproduction or eternality only of sounds produced by ourselves. The Hindu scriptures speak of 'the sound of the sky'. Shakespeare wrote 'there's not the smallest orb . . . but like an angel sings.'

The thought that we will some day be able to make our life 'in tune with the infinite' and set it to music, nay rather, express it from moment to moment in musical terms, must strengthen our desire to study all that can be known, ancient and modern, oriental and occidental, of this language of the Soul.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MUSIC OF HINDUSTAN<sup>1</sup>

- Portia*.— Music! hark!
- Nerissa*.—It is your music, madam, of the house.
- Portia*.—Nothing is good, I see, without respect;  
Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.
- Nerissa*.—Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.
- Portia*.—The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark  
When neither is attended; and I think  
The nightingale if she should sing by day,  
When every goose is cackling, would be thought  
No better a musician than the wren  
How many things by season season'd are  
To their right praise and true perfection.'

*Merchant of Venice*—Shakespeare

Few people realise how important to a nation are its arts. When all the political freedom, all the wealth, all the power, even all the knowledge of the greatest empires and nations of the past are nought but memories, still their great works of Art remain imperishable monuments of their glory. There are the famous Cyclopean sculptures on the Easter Islands to tell us of the power of an older Atlantean race, there are the Pyramids of Egypt, the marble relics of Rome, the poetry and drama of Greece, the Alhambra of Spain and the pottery of the ancient Etruscans. Truly 'Art is long and time is fleeting.' Therefore it behoves those who take 'long views' (the only perspectives which will ensure permanency) to turn their attention to the Arts of India if they desire to hold her head high among the nations.

<sup>1</sup> Published in *The Servant of India*, April 21, 1921.

At present India ranks as a Dependency. Even as a Dependency she is still accorded the title 'the Great Dependency'. That state became her lot owing to internecine strife, lack of co-operation between her component parts, lack of science and organisation, lack of unified self-help to resist invasion. Now India is poor; it has been exploited materially, but its Arts remain its royal dower, its untouched wealth, its truest claim to dignity and world honour. A beggar gets nought but contempt; a donor commands respect. India possesses a wealth of *artistic* knowledge and power which could even at this moment bring her the homage of the world if only the world could be made aware of its existence.

It has been the misfortune of India that those from the Western world who have come to India have been almost altogether 'merchants, missionaries and magistrates', sections of the European people who have never been interested in the imaginative or artistic expression of the people amongst whom they work. For long centuries India lay far out of the beaten track of travellers. The custom of travel as the finishing touch to the College career of English University men such as Milton, Addison, Byron, etc. never brought them as far as India. Had the great Ruskin had the opportunity to travel in India he could not have written so inaccurately about Indian art. Alas, it seems to be the fate of all artists to be poor, and journeys to India from the West cost a small fortune. So from the side of the West Indian Art has had comparatively little exploration, while on the side of India it has had little advertisement, little display. Indeed it is deplorable how uninformed even Indians themselves are about the points of value there are in their own art-treasures. How few have visited



the Caves of Ajanta to see the famous paintings of the Buddhist era, or have come under the spell of the pathetic glories of sculptured granite in the deserted royal city of Vizianagar in the South, or the pierced marble carvings of the Muhammadan architecture of Fatehpur-Sikhri in the North? But while an Edwin Arnold and a Tagore can carry the literature treasures of India to the West, a Lady Herringham and another Tagore display its gift of colour and form, a Lord Curzon and Dr. Coomaraswamy appreciate and preserve its unequalled architecture and sculpture, who has sung its songs into the ear of the world? The West knows something of India the builder, the sculptor, the painter, the poet, but of India the singer—nothing!

In my studies for the examinations for the Degree of Bachelor of Music of an Irish University, I had to read much concerning the history of music and musical instruments, but save for a couple of quotations from Strabo stating that Pythagoras derived his knowledge of music from India I never came across anything relating to the existence of a great system of music in India. As a matter of fact Western musicians do not know that India is a musical nation, or that it has developed its own musical science, and they will hardly believe us when we tell them these things, so strange does it seem to them that there can be any kind of music different from that which is the youngest and most beloved by the populace of the Western arts.

But what do I actually find? That since the earliest days music has been studied and venerated in India. Musical and *mantric* sound is the subject of one of the Vedas, the Sama Veda. The occult science of sound has at all times been more understood and investigated in

India than in any other part of the world and it still rules in the choice of times and seasons as well as of psychological states for the use of appropriate *ragams*. I find also the basic material of music, if I may call it so, namely the divisions of sound between a note or sound or *swaram* and its octave or similar sound in a higher pitch are made use of to the fullest extent in India for melody in a way quite unknown to Western musicians. Both systems have twelve divisions of this octave as their common stock of sound material within an octave. The Indian system alone, however, further divides these into the twenty-two *shrutis* and uses, though not frequently, these delightfully fine sub-divisions called quarter-tones. The sense of hearing of the average musician of the West, or of the non-musician, simply cannot distinguish these minute variations from its well-known sounds. Therefore, in the amount of material for the formation of musical compositions, and in the more perfect sense of trained musical hearing of single notes in sequence, Indians are in advance of Occidentals.

The contrast between East and West in the use of the twelve semitones or *swarams* is most remarkable and from a study of it India emerges far and away superior to Europe. Every form of permutation and combination of these twelve *swarams* in arrangements of seven has been scientifically classified ages ago and, as the 72 *melakartas*, form what Westerners would call 72 complete different scales. These again have been selected from to form derived partial scales or *ragams*. What do we find in the West? Only *three* out of these 72 are used. Only to three combinations of the twelve sounds taken seven at a time does the Western ear

respond with pleasure or understanding, only to three scale foundations has it become accustomed. The Greeks chose seven out of the possible combinations and used them for some centuries; but since about A.D. 1500 four have fallen entirely into disuse either through Western prejudice, or its limited aesthetic psychology, or laziness, or the claims on its musical attention of the growing experimentation with harmony in addition to melody, and the fact remains that all Western music is formed from Dhira Sankarabharana, Kiravani, and Gaurimano-hari *ragams*, according to South Indian terminology; in other words from the major scale, the Harmonic minor scale and the Melodic minor scale.

Nothing of the beauty of Mayamalavagaula, the sweetness of Kalyani, the pensiveness of Bhairavi, the strength of Todi, are known to the Western world. Songs written in these *ragams* are as inexplicable to Western ears as hearing a conversation in Tamil or Urdu. There are very truly musical languages as foreign as spoken languages. The Western hearer must get his ear accustomed to the particular sequence of sounds contained in each of these *ragams*, otherwise the melody will have no appeal to him; it only confuses him in the same way as the addition of harmony to a melody confuses the Eastern hearer till he too has accustomed his ear to hearing perpendicularly as one may say, instead of horizontally. The position regarding the inclusiveness of India's Sound material in common use cannot be better expressed than by that great comparative student of the Eastern and Western systems of music, Mr. A Chinna-swamy Mudaliar, who wrote in 1892 :

‘Viewed in the light of mere permutations and combinations, the tabulations of the *melakartas* might at

first sight appear an extremely artificial and dry arithmetical process devoid of all artistic merit from a musical point of view; but all the beauty and symmetry of Nature as well as all the charm and sweetness of Music lie deep in the theory of Numbers, and every musical sound and interval has its exact number of vibrations and ratios, the slightest change in which exercises such a potent sway over the emotions of the heart and the yearnings of the soul that everyone of the Modes thus arrived at is by itself an Elysium of heavenly bliss to those who have trained themselves with patience and taste to read between the rough mechanical lines sketched out by Nature.

The almost antediluvian scheme of the East is infinitely more comprehensive and systematic than that embraced by all the ancient as well as modern systems of the West. The contention that the European major scale is the only natural scale giving full satisfaction to the ear, and that even the minor mode is artificial, will thus appear to be far-fetched, inasmuch as they form part only of the complete and exhaustive scheme evolved by simple and natural combinations of the material in our possession.

In Europe the tonality of the Major Scale has but recently settled down to its present form after numerous changes and elaborate experiments for centuries. Yet with what majesty, imperturbability and effulgence has this bright star, so recently discovered in the West, retained its legitimate throne (No. 29), in the musical firmament of the East (as *Sankarabharana* or *Bilahari*) for ages and ages

before the Grecians caught a glimpse of the *Lux ab Oriente?*

If India's gift of three *ragams* only has already so enriched the West artistically, what joy will she not bring to the world when she freely and lavishly pours forth her full musical wealth through travelling singers and instrumentalists and explanatory musical literature? Gifts of beauty and knowledge do not impoverish the giver, but are like mercy 'twice blessed'; they take nothing from him, but give him added honour and reverence.

'For in the mystery of Beauty's feast

The more I take, the more is she increased.'

But it is not only in its science of *ragams* that the East can teach the West, it is also in its science of *talams* or rhythm. The ear of the latter is accustomed only to rhythmic divisions of two, three, four, six, nine, twelve units. The Indian musician delights in those composed of five, seven, ten, fourteen, and the intermediate numbers right up to twenty-nine, in addition to the few common in the West. It is this Eastern peculiarity of rhythm that often causes the Western listener to Eastern music so much aesthetic discomfort. He cannot find his rhythmic bearings and feels entirely at sea. He tries to fit Western times into these complicated *talams* and of course it cannot be done, and in disgust he exclaims 'there's no method in their madness!' whereas the fault lies in his own ignorance of what is being worked out. The Indian mastery over time, or rather over periodicity in time, is one of the most noticeable traits in its national psychology, and it shows itself in music in the amazing popularity of drumming. There is no other country in which the beat of the drum is to be heard day and night. Big drums, little drums,

long drums, short drums, shallow drums, deep drums,—who can count their variety? In India it is as if the very pulse of the earth were being continuously marked by birth, marriage, festival, funeral drums. And what power over intricate rhythmic designs is shown! Ingenuity also to the highest degree! We have nothing to come near them in the West. In its cages of duple, triple, and quadruple time Western music is 'cribbed, cabined and confined'. Many a time have the great composers felt their limitations and tried to break free, as in the case of Beethoven especially, only to find themselves in chaos. If these had only known the beauty and freedom of these widely used Indian *talams* they would have had at their fingers' ends the medium for self-expression after which they were feeling.

In the West the 'melody-mould' or 'leit-motif' was first used by Wagner in the nineteenth century and was hailed as a kind of apex of musical invention, but it has been known to India for thousands of years and has been fully explored and developed centuries ago by Indians. As a ragam theme it is the subject of a musical examination by the performer. It is first glanced at, then one note is subjected to a little change, then others similarly, till the general flexibility of the material is known to the musician. Then he begins to draw out his melodic form, time after time he mounts, ever soaring a note higher, ever dipping deeper, until we listen breathlessly for the climax which comes finally in a poise of peace in mid-air on a long drawn quiet note with perhaps a quiver in it reminiscent of the former effort. But this is only its first Entrance examination; it must also go through its Intermediate and its Final Graduate courses in the Anupallavi and Charanam

sections so that it may be fully tested and that all that it contains may be made manifest. A good musician's power to develop and demonstrate the measures hidden in a simple melody-mould is a lesson in concentration and one-pointedness badly needed by the restless West. If only the West would tarry, and if only the East would move!

The Indian musical system has endowed its exponents with a perfectly trained ear for consecutive sounds, with a brain and memory for the most intricate and sustained *talams* (rhythms), with the most inspiring subject-matter for his expression, namely the praise and nature of God, with an unequalled power of concentration on a single theme, with sweet accompanying instruments, and with the Gods and Goddesses, Siva, Saraswati and Krishna, themselves leaders of the art, and yet—it brings a blush of shame to the cheeks of a Western lover of music to see how music is dishonoured in India by Indians themselves, to learn of the pittance that is offered to teachers of music, of the low fees offered to professional musicians for a whole evening's entertainment, of the contempt with which the whole profession of music is regarded in certain parts of India, to find the art of Saraswati looked upon as a temptress, an effeminising and degrading influence rather than as an inspirer and an ennobling and purifying force. People blame music when they should blame themselves. The people of the West, though far more materialistic and with not half of the noble science of music revealed yet to them, honour music in every possible way, giving high and noble titles to their greatest singers and players, paying their professors of music salaries equal to those given to their professors of

science, literature or classics, gladly giving a Tetrzinni Rs. 15,000 (£1,000) per concert for singing at forty concerts in one tour in America, compelling boys and girls to learn the elements of music as part of their school curriculum, and encouraging pride in their national music individually and collectively.

It is deplorably true that the British Government has not given to Indian music the patronage and endowment it ought, but it has put no barriers in the way of the foundation of Indian Musical Academies and schools being founded by wealthy zemindars and rajahs, or by any enthusiastic lovers of the art. It is still within the power of these to revive widespread interest in this art and to extend knowledge in it. The rulers of the Indian States of Travancore, Mysore, Baroda, Indore, and Gwalior are all noted for the way they delight to honour the music and musicians of their native land. What they have done could be done throughout any part of British India if only Indians themselves cared enough. I do not think the present generation (1921) can grow a new heart in this matter, but now that Indian education has come under Indian control some of us who have the interests of music at heart must urge with all our power that Indian music shall be taught in all primary, secondary and high schools just as Western music is being taught in all Western schools. It is within our power to train the new generation in the scientific elements of their own great system of music by means of class-singing taught with the help of notation on the blackboard and depending only on Indian instruments such as the tambura for giving the *sruti* and keeping the voice in tune, and on the vina, sitar, sarangi, or dilruba for rectifying any mistakes



made by the students in reading the notation direct. These instruments should accompany the voices, not lead them as is so often mistakenly done, or drown them as is the case when a harmonium is resorted to.

In thus educationally establishing musical knowledge all over India the harmonium must be rigorously excluded, in the interests of both Eastern and Western systems. One might travel the length and breadth of Great Britain and France and never see an instrument resembling the kind of harmonium which Indians mistakenly think is an honourable part of Western music. It is only the equipment of Central European beggars. It has no place as an Indian instrument. It is unworthy of both East and West. It is the most sinister influence in Eastern music today. It is tuned falsely and contrary to the natural tuning employed for countless centuries in India. It prohibits all use of quarter-tones. Its harsh, over-loud tone is quite unsuitable for accompanying the human voice which is strained in trying to hold its own against its protagonist. It is sapping all musical self-reliance in the voice so that even a good singer feels helpless unless he is propped up by the harmonium. It is no wonder it is called the harm-onium, for it works 'harm' wherever it goes!

The beautiful instruments that India possesses of her own, which sufficed far greater musicians than are now amongst us, are among the assets of the system, and their introduction to other parts of the world will go far towards removing the ignorance that exists concerning the musical culture of the East. The West needs a new stock of musical material. Who but the East is the storekeeping Mother? Will she not nourish her child? When she gives she will also receive. A new

vitality will appear in her own art, experiments will be made along the line of its own genius to suit modern conditions of race and personal expression, for an art that stands still is an art that is preparing for its funeral. Life means movement, change, progress, expansion. There are unlimited vistas to the development of Indian music once it extends its instrumental range of execution to the seven octaves to which the ear can easily respond and break its present barriers of the three octaves which limit the human voice only. The attitude of mind which denies the legitimacy of harmony as an accompaniment to melody will also need to be changed, but it will come naturally, by expansion from within and not from imitation of the West, and then it will find its own methods of soul-stirring expression.

I do not believe that it is the fate of India only to have prepared the ground for others to reap its harvest. I believe Indians themselves have it in them to produce modern music out of the great heritage of their ancestors that will ravish the world and draw all music lovers to this Motherland of the Arts.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TRAINING OF THE EMOTIONAL NATURE

The man who hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils;  
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,  
And his affections dark as Erebus;  
Let no such man be trusted.

*Merchant of Venice*—Shakespeare

THE organism of the human being is complex. It may be divided into the physical equipment, the emotional apparatus, the thinking and directing mental department, and the creative, initiative, or Soul centre.

To function to its highest capacity each of these divisions must go through training or discipline. The mother trains the little body of the baby and toddler how to control its muscles, how to hold, how to walk, how to talk, how to adjust strains and stresses, all the unconscious gymnastics involved in supplying the daily needs of the body. Later the youngster gets physical training in school through organised games, special drills and physical culture. In later life all kinds of sport, climbing, hiking, pilgrimages, breathing exercises, ju-jitsu, boxing, fencing, dancing, etc., keep the body in training. In the Orient many of these exercises are definitely linked with religious and philosophic ideas as in the Yogic breathing exercises, the discipline of the Zen Buddhism or ju-jitsu, the prostrations to the Sun of Hinduism and all its ceremonials of cleansing.

Everyone knows how it is the special aim of schools and colleges to train the Mind in its functions of memory and reasoning. It learns how to adjust the sound symbols of speech so as to express its needs; it learns the written symbols of speech so that mind may communicate with mind without sound; it learns the symbols of counting so as to regulate exchanges. In short through the training of education the Thinker is able to gain ever-increasing powers of expression. A mind untrained is like a field untilled, it produces a little nourishment in rank grass, a few weeds, a modicum of shade through the few shrubs or trees which have seeded themselves in it. But contact with the students of schools and colleges in every country will convince one at once of the superiority of the trained mind over the untrained. We graphically call this 'head' training. Thus head and hand have been studied and ample provision is available for training them.

How, however, about the heart?

Feeling springing from the heart acts before reason. Our emotional nature gives the lead to our general actions. Attractions or repulsion drive us as they spring up in response to outside stimulation from our organs of sense. We are creatures of moods. Surely it is as necessary to have training for the control and discipline of the feelings as for the physical apparatus and the reasoning faculties.

From the first moment of the child's life it has emotional feeling; even the toddler shows its reaction as pain or pleasure, depression or elation, anger or contentment, dislike or love. Far too little attention is being paid in these days to the necessity that exists for the disciplining and training of the emotional nature.

While some countries realise the necessity for this conscious training of the emotions, as Japan, for example, all countries have failed to give it the predominant part in education which it should hold, and some countries, as India, make practically no provision for training the moods and morals of youth.

The necessity for emotional education has been overlooked because of the general supposition that humanity acts as it thinks, and that therefore the thinking apparatus is all that needs to be educated. The supposition is erroneous. The truth is the other way round: humanity does not act as it thinks: it thinks as it acts. People act under impulses further back than thought and then seek to justify the action by mental assembling of suitable reasons.

The agents by which the emotions, or desire nature, can be trained are the Arts, Religion and Love. The highest service that Art can accomplish for man is to become at once the voice of his nobler aspirations and the steady disciplinarian of his emotions. Feeling carries with it the impulse to action. In fact the Arts arise out of a certain instinct which impels man to make an appeal to the senses by expressing his thoughts and emotions in some external form. This urge to creation is one of the most valuable agencies of self-development that human beings possess. The laws of creation are the laws of Beauty and Love. The attempt to create in any form of art is to put oneself into the apprenticeship of perfection and to align oneself with the orderliness and serviceableness of the universe. It is worth while to review the effects of the different arts in this connection.

Architecture may be called the first art of humanity—

Shelter is necessary for self-preservation from the art of building a nest to the designing and construction of a palace. How happy little children are in playing with blocks, bricks and sand! As they grow older they delight in making dolls' houses, or in building bridges or cranes with Meccano, then later comes the love of designing and the joy of building in groups as labourers. Unfortunately students are not given sufficient opportunities or leadership for the discipline of the art of practical building. But in this creative art the individual is coming under the influence of beauty of straight line, form, power, symmetry, angles, the value of foundations, the satisfaction of correct proportions. There is also practice in joint labour. The art of Painting trains the powers of observation in appreciation, line, colour, contrast, composition, the surfaces of life, and the science of light.

The art of Sculpture trains the observer to appreciate the entire object, the creation in three dimensions, the study of materials of permanency and skill in manipulating them. It promotes an all-round view of life and is a replica of carving out our own careers.

The arts of Poetry and the Drama use words as the medium of their power to review, reproduce and create life. Poetry weds thought and feeling. It is the sublimation of speech, and disciplines and refines verbal expression. It creates a world out of images evoked by words. The creative power is carried from the objective media of stone and brick, paint and canvas, marble and bronze right into living personifications in the synthesis of all the arts found in Poetical Drama.

And Music, the youngest of the Arts in Occidental

life, the oldest in the Orient, what of it? It is *par excellence* the language of the emotions, the Art whereby the soul may soar free of earth. It is the art of the Fourth Dimension. It effaces the personal, the concrete images of the daily mind and substitutes unity for diversity, the impermanent for the permanent. It establishes its own laws of manifestation on the life of the musician. Through learning the laws which result in the creation of any form of Beauty we set up a standard of righteousness in our whole being which prevents us from doing evil. 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, That is all ye know and all ye need to know', said Keats as his message. If the ear is attuned to perfection of pitch, so that a falsity in the tuning of two strings which should coincide pains us, or the untrue and inaccurate intonation of a *swara* in a *raga* makes us uncomfortable, then we shall also feel ashamed if we find ourselves give way to an outburst of anger or allow ourselves to prevaricate or cheat or become slaves of any degrading habit, for our aesthetical nature will feel outraged, its discomfort at an emotional state of affairs that is out of tune with the laws of harmony will demand remorse and reform.

Training of youth in all or any of the arts and particularly in music is the groundwork for a beautiful and cultured civilisation. One has read of such a high Art of Living amongst the ancient Greeks; one has seen it in Japan before its invasion by the West. Its ideals will not be material prosperity of the Almighty Dollar variety, nor military might of the Prussian pattern, nor even intellectual science which would subordinate heart to head. Rather will it worship God as the Supreme Artist-Craftsman. Beauty will be its standard and

happiness and goodness will follow in its train in a social order which will rank love of God and one's neighbour as above pearls. Then we might expect a new order of chivalry in consideration of the strong for the weak, a new sociology, a new deportment, a new etiquette, ugly noises eliminated, 'unshapely things' remade, tragedies of sex experiences transmuted.

For training to this end of excellence music is the most effective and direct of the Arts within our control by means of the power of song in the human voice. It is also the spontaneous medium of expression for the emotions, as we know when we lilt for pleasure and lament for pain; when we pour out our praise to the Giver of All; when we yearn in aspiration for unity with the Beloved.

Just as we learn how to write script in order to express our thoughts and reasonings objectively so should every child be taught the script of musical notation and the laws of musical composition in order to express its feelings. Originality in this form of self-expression should be encouraged from quite as early an age as is writing.

Desire for pleasure may produce a most selfish nature. Great sensitiveness of emotion uncontrolled may produce a criminal, elation may result in conceit, depression in suicide. The slave mentality of India is interlinked with the lack of training of the emotions in education, the lack of balance of the youth of the New World is due to the same cause. In the Orient there is depression, lack of joy, pessimism, passive acquiescence in bad luck, no active movement towards a determined happiness. Truly it is time for a new message and a new technique. With eyes and ears opened to the evidences of a Loving



Creator shown through the beauty of colour, line, sound in sky, tree, sea, shell, flower, bird and baby there can be evolved a technique which is a corrective of human mistakes.

The desire to create is one of the primary emotions. It must be given a wise outlet from the earliest days. Particularly in adolescence it must be guided aright. It is a law of life that when creative activity is exercised through a higher mode of expression there is a diminution of creative impulse in a lower mode, such as the sexual which in youth needs such sensitive and sympathetic guidance. Experience with young people has proved to the writer the invaluable help music can be in smoothing out the complexes of the stirring powers of life at this difficult age for boys and girls. Turn the forces into the creation of works of art and problems of surplus vitality are solved. And what is true of youth is equally valuable to adults. Emotion may be controlled and directed into ever higher and higher channels of expression.

'I love all beauteous things,  
I seek and adore them.  
God hath no better praise  
And man in his hasty days  
Is honoured for them.  
I too will something make,  
And joy in the making,  
Although tomorrow it seem  
But the empty words of a dream  
Remembered on waking.'

(Bridges)

The desire nature, the emotions, are the driving force of the supreme achievements of mankind, the immortal works of Art. With adequate training available to all in Art an era must emerge in which buildings as beautiful as the Taj Mahal or the Milan Cathedral, poetry as moving as the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* or *Gitanjali*, music as full of the Divine Ananda (Bliss) as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Scriabine's *Poem of Ecstasy*, Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* and Thyagaraja's *Endaro Mahanu bavulu* will be forthcoming, not once in centuries but as the ripe fruitage of a general renaissance brought about by the appreciation of the powers of the Arts to train the emotional nature of humanity to manifest itself in its highest powers of expression.

## CHAPTER V

### THE NATIONAL VALUE OF MUSIC

The introduction of a new kind of music must be shunned as imperilling the whole State; since styles of music are never disturbed without affecting the most important of political institutions.

*The Republic—Plato*

THIS is an era of re-valuation of hitherto unchallenged estimates of people and things. Monarchy, for instance, has in most countries been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Manners in the West have been changed almost beyond recognition, modesty is old-fashioned, merit has superseded family influence in high places and the mob emerges as both the mentor and the menace. Music and the arts generally are amongst the factors in national life which have also come under analysis in this process of up-to-date evaluation. No one living in India can deny that the renaissance evident in the rest of the world is also causing people in this country to question subjects long neglected. New life by its pulsing, surging energy finds out the thin spots in its garments of conventional thought, in its outworn customs, its inequalities of caste. No subject is more under review than education, and in no country is this more needed than in India where a double set of deficiencies has to be rectified—the acknowledged inadequacy of English systems of education to meet the needs of the whole nature of its youth in training, and the additional mistakes arising out of the imposition of the educational system of a foreign country (evolved by a modern people, practical, orderly, inartistic, un-

emotional and objective, living in a temperate zone), on an old civilization, sun-baked, non-restive, philosophical, artistic and subjective.

It is but little realised that national standards are set by only quite a few people, and that national character is moulded by the vision, knowledge and power of this small band of people. The character of Young India is being shaped by those who planned its education with the brain primarily, with the physical body only quite secondarily, and with the emotions (the heart and the soul) not at all—and this despite the glamour that is cast over the heartless curricula by the popularity of the course in 'Arts' and the fact that the great proportion of the graduates in India are Bachelors of Art. What do they all know of Art? There is not even one course in any of the Fine Arts included in an Indian College curriculum! What a hullabulloo there would be if the Women's Christian College in Madras, which has received nearly two lakhs from the Government for equipment in Science, had asked for the same amount for equipping the subject of music and, rightly, Indian music? The fashion in thought which is driving almost all girls into Science and which has made science compulsory on all girls is as stupid as the thought-fashion of Europe 150 years ago which compelled all girls to learn the piano whether they had taste or gift or ability for it or not. If it be argued that science is necessary for women to balance their emotionalism, then music or one of the fine arts is equally necessary for all men students to soften their intellectualism! How much better the Japanese do these things! They realise that it is in the very nature of woman to desire to spread beauty and order all around her in the home, and so

they have 'flower arrangement' and training in etiquette and deportment as compulsory subjects in their curricula for girls. In all Japanese Universities there is a course in 'Æsthetics'. It is noteworthy that in Great Britain there are in the Universities Faculties for granting Degrees in Music, and singing is a compulsory subject in primary schools. Compared with these countries how impoverished in cultural training is India!<sup>1</sup>

It has always been by their arts rather than by their politics or their science that the nations of the past have made their most lasting impact on the world. Greece might be physically conquered by Rome, but she even then held and still holds victorious sway over all Europe in architecture, drama, poetry, music and sculpture. Similarly it is criticised Russia which is impressing its vision of Art on the modern Western world. Whatever Bolshévism destroyed one must remember that it has consistently cherished its theatre, opera, ballet and art galleries. Why? Because in its arts a nation expresses its soul. Because by the training of its citizens in the practice and appreciation of the arts the soul of the people is disciplined and learns how adequately and harmoniously to balance all other activities of the national being in their manifestations.

The Greeks valued the supreme utility of music so greatly that they made it a primary subject of the education of every boy and girl. Plato says in *The Republic* that the introduction of a new style of music will upset political institutions. One recalls the im-

<sup>1</sup> Published in 1925 in *The Madras Daily Express Annual*. Several universities have since then introduced courses in music and painting, notably Madras and the Hindu University of Benares.

mense influence of 'The Marsellaise' on the French people, of 'Bande Mataram' on Bengalis, of jazz music on America. I myself think that the introduction and the present popularity of the little Austrian harmonium into India is a denationalising influence of a far more insidious character than people realise. Those who are true nationalists will foster the practice and development of the noble Indian instruments and discourage the use of the harmonium even as a sruti (drone) accompaniment, as its presence offers too great a temptation to frail humanity to take a short cut to learning an accompanying instrument which forces the singer to omit all the microtones which are the precious distinguishing features of Indian music, or else, if these are retained, accustoms the ear to disharmonious relations between sounds that ought to be absolutely coincident in pitch.

India is a most musical nation, and its folk-music can rank with any in the world. Some Indian musician would be doing a national and an international service if he or she would gather into notation a collection of the folk songs to which the common acts of Indian life are set. It is so beautiful to see and hear the paddy (rice) plants being set in rows by bright-sareed women counting the paddy rows by the stanzas of the paddy-song. It adds to the refreshing quality of the water being drawn from the deep well that the steps taken on the well-trapeze see-saw have been counted out to music. It gave me a thrill to hear suddenly one of my teachers at the Women's Home of Service doing some multiplication sums to a melody. Why, even the very roads are laid down by a band of about twenty coolies to invocations of which the moment of the big

pull of the stone-roller coincides with the climax note of a song! Life set thus to music is more likely to be harmonious in all its adjustments than a civilisation which keeps its rhythm and its melody for concert halls. But how much more perfect it still would be if each of these spontaneous singers had the advantage of some systematic training in the art of music! We realise that training can improve the rough attempts of a child who longs to draw or paint trees and houses and figures of gods. It is amazing how little people realise that similarly the human voice, or the hand on an instrument, can the more perfectly express its emotions in music if that voice, ear and hand have understanding, training, system, added to their spontaneous and traditional ebullitions. The voice and ear are God-given freely, but their perfecting must be the result of our co-operation with God to make the best out of the gifts presented to us with our birth. Education is the instrument of such co-operation, and we are beginning to realise our responsibilities for using it by providing free compulsory education for all in those subjects which make for interchange of thought between human beings. Shall we not add also music which is the medium of communication between our souls and the inner worlds, between our souls and God?

Music in India is essentially the handmaid of religion. Perhaps one reason why it was excluded from the British system of education in this country was because encouragement of it might mean encouragement of Indian religion. But that day is past. So great has been the renaissance of art in India that since this was written Annual Music Conferences, Music Competitions and Summer Schools for music teachers have become popu-

lar throughout India. The culture of nationalism developed the demand for national culture. Any analysis of the national value of music will bring as its corollary an understanding of the value of national music and a demand for its inclusion in the curricula of schools and colleges, so that Young India may grow up in the image of the young Krishna with his beloved flute, and of Saraswati radiant with her veena.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE VALUE OF MUSIC IN EDUCATION

Is not education in music of the greatest importance because that the measure and harmony enter in the strongest manner into the inward part of the soul?

The man who hath herein been educated as he ought perceived in the quickest manner whatever workmanship is defective and whatever execution is unhandsome. . . . Being disgusted in a proper manner he will praise what is beautiful, rejoicing in it, and receiving it into his soul, be nourished by it, and become a worthy and good man. Education in music is for the sake of such things as these.

*The Republic—Plato*

THE educational thought of the world looks on the importance of the inclusion of music in school curricula from three different standpoints. The Greek ideal of education considered that music and gymnastics should be the only subjects taught between the ages of seven and fourteen, rhythm and poetry being included in the term 'music'. The modern Western attitude is to include music as a compulsory subject to be learnt by every student, but only to a limited extent. The attitude of Indian educational authorities is to exclude music almost altogether from its curricula of High Schools, Boys' Schools and Colleges. Thus we find that in India,—where on all sides the evidence shows how inextricably mixed up with the life of the people music is,—there is no organised mass training in the art upon which the people depend for the expression of their emotions.

The Greeks, as expressed by Plato, considered that "when youths have made a good beginning in play (gym-

nastics) and by the help of music have gained the habit of good order, then this habit of good order will accompany them in all their actions, and be a principle of growth to them; and if there be any fallen places in the State they will raise them up again.' At another time he says, 'our education had two branches, gymnastics, which was occupied with the body, and music, the sister-art, which infused a natural harmony into mind and literature.' It was not only in the West that music was at one time considered fundamentally valuable to the character of the nation; in Asia also Confucius stated, 'if one should desire to know whether a kingdom is well-governed, if its morals are good or bad, the quality of its music will furnish the answer.'

By one's contact with the place that music plays in Western schools even in its modified place of importance, one realises the loss daily being inflicted on Indian children by the exclusion of this great art. And one desires ardently, both as a result of Western experience, and of educational principles, to include the teaching of music in every Boys' and Girls' School in this great musical country of India.

The art of music in the past in India was taught only individually, not to classes. This must continue to be so with regard to the teaching of instruments, as is the case in every country. But Indian teachers of the past did not realise that by the aid of the eye they could extend enormously their power of teaching simultaneously large numbers how to sing. The use of notation is the instrument for a more widely spread knowledge of scientific music, and the handmaid of the new type of music teacher.

It was the pride of ancient Indian musicians to retain for themselves in their own memories the heritage of music derived by them orally from their forefathers. Music was their sacred charge to be zealously guarded, to be conserved, to be kept to the limited few who were expected to be experts. From the thought of giving out freely their knowledge of music these old devotees shrank. There is the classical instance of Tansen, the great court musician, who would sing his most cherished songs only to the Emperor Akbar. Within the last thirty years one of the best Southern musicians himself destroyed some *grantha* leaves of famous *ragams* rather than have them passed on to inheritors whom he thought unqualified musically to possess them. Only specially gifted individuals were accepted as pupils, and for this reason few young people received the benefit of systematised musical training.

But, apart from the specialised training then and now of the limited number of pupils, there is a mass of folk-song in India which has been traditionally handed on from generation to generation of peasants and communities, and which is usually sung in chorus during agricultural or manual processes. There is also an amount of concerted singing in *bhajana* parties and in *kolattam*. With the exception of the folk-song, however, the lack of scientific training in any widespread way has brought about a degeneration in the great ancient art which all deplore, many *ragams* being sung in a slipshod, inaccurate, haphazard manner, and it has allowed many inroads of false intonation and foreign influence, especially of the Hindustani nature and harmonium nature, to creep into the musical knowledge of the present day. Those in charge of Indian Educa-

tion have not realised that music is a science in India and that, as such, apart altogether from its value as beauty, it should be included in the educational system of the country.

The teaching of singing to large classes of students trains them in co-operation; it inculcates discipline; it increases scientific and international racial knowledge; it develops national pride, it refines the nature and adds happiness to the whole of life.

There is a tendency towards self-centredness in the Indian character which has enabled members of a joint-family system to retain their individuality, and which makes it possible for four or five students to read aloud at close quarters without in the least troubling one another. It is the very antithesis of this spirit that class-singing awakens; the necessity for producing a unified sound forces each member of the class to a sense of awareness of his neighbours and draws his attention to the sounds that they also are making. Thus at the outset co-operation is instilled into a class of students met for instruction and this forms a very necessary corrective to that intensity of individualism which in India often shows itself as selfishness, and whose effect will be seen later percolating through the whole civic life.

There is no quicker means of obtaining unity and order than by a music class. Educationists in the West realised that the condition of receptivity is one of the necessities for successful instruction of their pupils. The boys and girls come each morning to the school from the most diversified homes. All have different content in their thoughts; there is no other subject which can harmonise and unify these varied minds so directly and quickly as a sweet aspirational song, of

well defined rhythm, sung in unison. This is the reason why it is the custom in the West for the day's school work to begin with music. It is quite as necessary, if not more necessary, that in a highly individualised country like India a similar custom should be adopted.

Music impresses on its students a very definite discipline, the more valuable because each student is desirous of obeying that discipline. There are barriers of time (*talam*), intonation (*ragam-swarafns*), production of sound which must not be transgressed. Where a whole class is anxious to produce a perfectly unified result, for any one of its members to transgress these boundaries and sing out of time or out of tune, brings on him a sense of displeasure from his comrades and discomfort to himself because he has made himself conspicuous or ridiculous. Accordingly each one voluntarily strives to keep within the boundaries of beauty imposed upon him by his devotion to the goddess of music. There are also laws relating to form and composition which may be easily analysed and understood in Indian music (such as the three-fold division of the *kriti*), and which unconsciously give musical students a better appreciation of the laws of form as found in good literature, in the formal conduct of public meetings, even in the amenities of social life. The sense of definition, of proper beginnings and endings, and of clearly worked-out elaborations of a theme, is developed both consciously and unconsciously in well-trained musical students, and it is for this reason that the Greeks and Confucius so interlinked the teaching of music with the art of government. In this connection also teachers of literature in India fail to realise how the absence of training in the laws

of musical rhythm prevents their students from appreciating the full beauties of English or other poetical literature, wherein scansion and melodious sound are often more than half the beauty of the poems, and the foundations of the art of musical reading. In another way also music helps discipline. It has constantly been found that, if there is a tendency to uproarious conditions, a request for a little class-singing will so 'soothe the savage breast' that following it there will be no difficulty whatever in maintaining order in that class. The giving of a bugle or kettle-drum to the most mischievous boy in a school is often the best means of turning him into one of its most useful members. It is the order and rhythm and periodicity of music which also make it such a help in physical culture exercises, and cause it to be so constantly used to accompany them in Western countries. The lack of music in this side of Indian education is deplorable.

Music has been called the language of the emotions and it certainly is the medium, the universal medium for the expression of people's feelings. If you realise that music is, in reality, the *science* of feelings, then to learn music is to learn a new language, and to understand the music of any country, is to know more of the emotions of the people of that country, of its race character, than by any other method. A nation is only half itself; its expression is its other half; and the most direct route to its expression of passion and aspiration is a knowledge of the science of its music.

There are great laws of sound which will help intellectually to expand the mind and to increase knowledge. The art of portraying this most ethereal and intangible of all the arts is a great system of symbolism. It is not

always possible for the people of different countries to hear the exponents of music of another country, but by learning the elements of its written symbolism, its musical notation, it is possible to come into contact with its emotions as expressed through its music. The teaching of music in schools must include a thorough teaching of both Eastern and Western notation which experience has demonstrated can be very easily taught simultaneously by blackboard demonstration. If only Western musicians knew the notation of Indian music, or if only Easterners could read Western notation, there would be opened up a pathway to mutual understanding on the higher side of the racial relationships between the peoples of the world. Why should not musicians be bi-lingual musically in their music notations? It does not by any means follow that knowing the musical language of the West would tend to bring more invasions of a foreign kind into Indian music; but it is most desirable that India, the mother from whom the Greeks gained their first lessons in music as Strabo recounts regarding Pythagoras, should know at first-hand something of the musical life of their direct descendant. Indians ought to have a pride in all that is good and worthy in Western music as well as in their own for it is their own kith and kin.

In our educational institutions there is not sufficient conscious training of the emotions. The arts are a great refiner of common life, but it is difficult to include a knowledge of architecture, sculpture and painting within school-life, for the materials in all cases are costly and difficult to obtain; but to everyone has been given without money and without price his natural reed, the human voice. Thus music, which is one of the most

enriching of the arts, is the cheapest to possess and cultivate. The choice of songs with strongly accentuated rhythms will stimulate slothful or sluggish temperaments; the choice of calm and pensive music will soothe the restless. Music is employed quite naturally to put the baby to sleep or to rouse the patriot to action. But our Indian educationists fail to apply it to the stages of growth in the children of school-going age who would as easily respond to it as either the baby or soldier. The school which loves music will show refinement and harmony in its pupils in all their actions. By the use of music the pettiness of personality may be forgotten. Devotion to God will find its easiest channel for aspiration and many impulses connected with the rising sex-life may be directed into finer lines of conduct. On all sides of the emotional school-life music may be used to purify, harmonise and uplift.

In India there is a lamentable lack of pride in the Indian arts amongst students. They do not realise that it is by their arts that nations held their permanent place in the appreciation and memory of the world, and they have failed to grasp the truth that one of the greatest paths of service open to Indians is the demonstration to the world of the wealth of musical knowledge which India possesses. It will only be when Indians know more of the differences between Western and Eastern music that India will more fully take pride in her wonderful heritage of song. Her systematised music is in its material as an ocean compared with the material of the West; but only a comparative knowledge of both will show her where she has much to give and where her daughter has more intensively developed a drop out of her ocean. The world appreciates those who bestow



favours upon it; it looks down upon beggars, those who seek either favours or rights. India has untold musical wealth still to pour out lavishly upon the world and as it does so in this and in other arts, it will gain its place high among the nations.

Apart from all these considerations the inclusion of music in the life of the student will bring with it happiness of a very pure kind, and it is in an atmosphere of joy that the young mind grows most quickly. The training in music during one's younger years insinuates into one's nature a love of beautiful sound which demands for itself an atmosphere of music and sweetness of tone, in voice, and in expression, throughout the whole life. It will give the boy or girl the power to entertain their friends and to be a source of pleasure to their circle throughout life. Also a knowledge of the science will provide one of the most engrossing hobbies of a refined kind to many who now follow the art afar off and but blindly. To all such music will come as an initiator into mysteries of harmonious living at present but little understood.

The power of the Press, the gathering together of formerly antagonistic groupings of people into one national unity, the growing demand for free and widespread knowledge, are all components in bringing about the democratisation of the arts, side by side with the democratisation of politics. From the standpoint, therefore, of the individual, national and international value of the subject India simply cannot afford to neglect or despise her music. With education recently become a Transferred Subject in the hands of Indian Ministers, the national music of the country must be honoured, must be taught, must be financially upheld, and the

first and easiest means of doing this is to make an Elementary Course of Class-singing, with proper training in notation, *talam*, and intonation, compulsory in all Indian schools.<sup>1</sup>

Written in 1924.

## CHAPT

### CHAPTER VII

#### INDIA'S GIFT OF SONG

But thou art also vocal in the spheres  
Moving to song too subtle for our ears.  
Oh! there are chantings in the winds that pass  
And poets hiding in each blade of grass;  
For Thou, God's eldest Voice that built the Whole,  
Singest the choric world back to no less a goal.

*Hymn to the Song-Goddess—Cousins*

How little the wide world knows of India the musician! How seldom are its musical treasures, its musical accomplishments the subjects of art criticisms such as are freely poured out in encouragement and comparative study on its architecture, its sculpture, its painting and its literature!

The gold of Golconda, the jewels of Maharajas, the muslins of Daṭca, the brass of Benares, the shawls of Kashmir, the silks of Surat, the cave paintings of Ajanta, the sculpture of Elephanta, the glory of the Taj Mahal, the feats of fakirs, the sacred lore of Samskrit, the fecundity of its philosophies, have all been bruited abroad in the earth, but its gift of song remains un-offered, unknown and unsung outside India's own confines.

Yet none of its arts is more perfect, more loved, more widespread, more interwoven with its life, than is its music. The Vedas are the oldest literature in the world, and one of them, the Samaveda, is entirely devoted to an exposition of music. Indian music is a pure product of the eastern tropics; it is the development of centuries of devoted study and practice; it is the root stock of all subsequent music.

Generally speaking, the western world does not know that India has a national system of music. It regards India as a heathen country, very primitive in its ways, and therefore it cannot imagine that India should long ago have evolved an art which, as the West knows it in its harmonic modern form, has been developed only since the seventeenth century.

Unfortunately the particular few westerners who have come into touch with Indian music are not the artists or trained musicians of their civilisation (with about half a dozen exceptions) and these specialised commercial or officialised products, depending entirely on their previous aural training and prejudices, find no 'method in the madness' of a group of Indian musicians. To them Indian music is as much a foreign language, and conveys as little, as a first hearing of Tamil or Urdu.

On the other hand, the love of propaganda is not a characteristic of India. No nation ever knew less or cared less for the art of self-advertisement. One regrets that when it has, through pressure, recently taken to the limelight, it is to display its grievances and its weaknesses, that it comes as a suppliant, and not rather as a proud possessor of the treasures of its own culture, offering to share them with a world seeking for fresh inspiration. But the barriers of exclusiveness, of sensitiveness, of narrow-visioned hoarding of knowledge, musical or otherwise, have been broken down by the Time-spirit. Art, as well as politics, has to become democratised and internationalised. The printing press demands its meal of music as well as of poetry, both formerly oral arts; the phonograph, the gramophone, and wireless telephony (most recent of inventions) have their

own musical script of vibrations that will not be denied; and finally the improved methods of speedy travel that will telescope distances and bring about rapidly increasing interchange of knowledge, all will take their share in disseminating 'from China to Peru' the hitherto secret science of Indian music.

Music in India is a science, an art and a religion. One often hears in India the phrase 'scientific music', and at first it sounds paradoxical to bracket cold-blooded science with emotional expression, yet a study of the system from which are created its *krithis*, *ragams*, etc., reveals it as basically mathematical, logical and scientific, leaving no room for human weaknesses or predilections, as it ruthlessly formulates its sound material from permutations and combinations of the twelve *swarams* (semitones), and its rhythmic material into *jatis* and *talas* (time signatures). Each resultant *melakarta* (scale), and its derivatives in limited form or melody mould, has been experimented with, classified, named in a way that would excite the admiration of even a super-scientific German. Where science dealt with substance and sequence in melody, it has been thorough, and has an immense store of knowledge to present to the world. But it stopped short at the art of simultaneous combination of sounds, i.e., *harmonised* melody. It failed to experiment with the equally scientific musical material of the natural harmonics of each sound, and only in the *vina* has it recognised, in a very limited form, the legitimacy of combined sounds of differing pitch. Yet, as far as it has explored, it is justifiably proud of its intellectual scientific basis.

Art has been defined as 'skill in action'. Shakespeare spoke of it as holding 'a mirror up to nature'. The

music of Hindustan is in its method a reflex of nature, with its repetition of type, elaborating by a slight, but at each repetition increasingly developed, variation of the original. A psychological study of a classical *raga* would reveal it as a replica of the doctrine of the evolution of species, with reincarnation, free-will, and reversal to type all included! The human voice is its unit and its measuring rod, its centre and its circumference, and not even Italy has paid more attention to the control of the voice and the breath than has India. Indeed so highly has skill in producing musical sound been rated, that there has been a tendency in modern times to degenerate South Indian music into mere vocal gymnastics and feats of flexibility.

Within the strict limits of the *ragam* (key) chosen, the power of improvisation is amazing, a demonstration of diversity in unity. The singer may play about like a god with his materials in his *alapanam* (free improvised prelude), he may limit himself to fixation in the three worlds, *pallavi*, *anupallavi* and *charanam* of his *raga*, amusing himself still with juggling feats in his sound material free of the fetters of words and thoughts in his *swarams*; he may still further limit himself to giving up such irresponsibilities in the *krithi*, the musical form so beloved of the master Thyagarajan; or he may be content with the simple, unaffected, unadorned lyrical outburst of spontaneous emotion in the *gitam* (song). The voice is the arbiter of all Indian music, the instruments are but its followers, they derive their life from the singer, they initiate nought. 'In the beginning was the word,' and the zealous protection of the overlordship of the voice has constituted the pride and the national idiosyncrasy of Bharatavarsha. Thus

its art includes extreme pliability of voice, a wide range of tone, a fine sense of ear, a prodigious memory (for little is committed to paper), and a mastery of ingenious improvisation and beautiful combinations.

Life in India is not divided into two compartments, the secular and the religious. *Every* action has its place in religion; it is regulated by *shastras*, illustrated in the *puranas*, rooted in the *vedas*. The master-musicians of India were saints and poets. In other countries a poet writes the words, a musician adds music to them. But in the Orient the poetry and its melody are a simultaneous creation, and their subject-matter and atmosphere are essentially religious. Music is not an entertainer or a panderer to the senses, or a photographic lens for realistic details; it is a holy thing. It is the handmaid of the Spirit, a path to realisation. All its songs are hymns, the gods are its themes, as is also the case in Indian drama. The mythological and divine subject-matter sublimates the emotions and lifts the singer and listeners far out of touch with worldly affairs. A music party is no programme of fragmentary songs; it is usually a mental and moral discipline necessitating powers of patience, and concentration of a very high order. A really fine musician will almost hypnotise his hearers as he works up to his climacteric points. Their hands and feet will join in keeping time, facial expressions change, heads move to appreciate the minute changes which gradually pile up 'the ascension from the abysses of silence towards sounds which are continually becoming more intensive, acute, and etherialised' to rise into that higher 'silence implying sound' which comes at the moment of ecstasy. Sometimes on these occasions it is but a small step from the sublime to the ridiculous,

but such a thought never enters the Indian hearer's mind. This music is not emotion for its own sake. It is not abstract music, nor didactic, neither vague nor impressionist, but one-pointed in 'devotion to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow'. It is a veritable instrument of *yoga*. The song on the hills in the dimness of dawn is the first invocation of God; the folk-songs of the ploughers and the drawers of water, the pipe of the goat-herd the plaint of the beggar, the trumpets of marriage and the songs of the drama, are all a day's garland of song for the Divine Rulers of human affairs. In this aspect there is elsewhere no parallel to Indian music.

What specific musical gifts has Mother India thus preserved so jealously through the millennia for humanity? Western music has built itself up on three only out of the seventy-two Indian *melakartas*—what it calls the major scale, the harmonic minor, and the melodic minor scales (*shankarabharanam*, *kiravani*, and *nattabhairavi ragams* respectively). The teeming millions of Indian people are trained by tradition in at least sixteen different root scale combinations, and their trained musicians have a working knowledge of over forty and a theoretical knowledge of the seventy-two. What unworked mines of musical gold for the world's musicians! The sweetness of *kalyani* *ragam* with its augmented fourth, the fascination of *mayamalavagowla* with its logically similar halves (C D-flat E F, G A-flat B C), the poignancy of *chakravaka* (C D-flat E F G A B-flat C), the distinctive qualities of sequences of sounds that would raise the hair of a westerner (C D-flat E-flat F-sharp G A-flat B-double flat C), are all new ground to be explored by the world as they already have been by



the Hindus. It will be like presenting a palette full of new colours to a painter. For each *ragam* has its own tone-atmosphere, its own aesthetic effect, and the knowledge and use of each cannot but open out a new world of pleasure and self-expression to the West.

Then also there is the Indian system's inclusion of quarter tones, employed rarely, but always most effectively in ways that would have appealed right to the heart of the French musician Cesar Franck, who uses semi-tones in a similar way, but misses the nuances of his Indian brother. Indeed an almost epic war is waged in India round the question of whether the octave is to be divided into twenty-two or less parts. The *leit motif* system of Wagner was but an approximation to the accumulation of stereotyped melody-moulds stored for use—or abuse—in India.

In rhythm, the number of differentiations and complex subdivisions of time in the Indian system is almost countless. The number of units in a bar may be anything between two and twenty-three, and may be even twenty-nine; while the *talas* containing five, seven or fourteen *aksharas* (beats in a bar) are as common as the two, three or four beats, or their multiples, are in western music. Thus Indian music discloses unique varieties of rhythm beside which jazz and ragtime pale into insignificance.

The very history of the derivation of Indian music links the art with the cosmos. 'Its first principles are said to have been taught by Brahma (God the Creator) to Bharatacharya who imparted a portion of his knowledge to Tumburu and Narada (rishis). The art was divided into *Deva gana* (music for Celestials), *rakshasa gana* (music for giants), and *manusya gana* (music for

man). This last which represents but a fraction of the whole, after distribution to other creatures such as birds, etc., is what is now recognised as the music of the earth.<sup>1</sup> There is a mass of legendary lore connected with the correspondences believed to exist between most of the *ragas* and their patron deities, appropriate hours, times and seasons, and their psychological power to excite certain passions and emotions. The five basic rhythms are traced to the great God, Ishwara. It was Nataraja who gave the finishing stroke to these time-measurements in his dances before the gods, while Brahma counted time as conductor, and Vishnu played the *Mundanga* (drum). With the growing evidence of worlds existing beyond the physical daily being investigated by psychical science, this aspect of the Indian system of music becomes more and more credible, and its magic of evocation will probably some day get the *imprimatur* of future western scientists.

The Western world is seeking a new rhythm, a new keynote, a new combination of forces and materials. India *must* come to its help. The Mother of Aryan Nations must no longer hoard her treasures in the hands of a few, but share them freely with her children. And as she gives, so, surely, will she receive in return.

Her charity must begin, however, at home. While all that has been said is true of the science of the great Indian system and of its finest exponents both past and present, it must be admitted with regret that in a widespread way the musical knowledge of the many is at the present time far from satisfactory. There are also differences in details, such as nomenclature and

<sup>1</sup> Published in 'Shama'a', 1920.

## CHAPTER VIII

### INDIA'S ORCHESTRA<sup>1</sup>

What passion cannot Music raise and quell?  
When Jubal struck the chorded shell  
His listening brethren stood around,  
And, wondering, on their faces fell  
To worship that celestial sound.  
Less than a God they thought there could not dwell  
Within the hollow of that shell  
That spoke so sweetly and so well.  
What passion cannot Music raise and quell?

*St. Cecilia's Day*—Dryden

THE history of India's Orchestra is synchronous with the most ancient literature in the world. Its history book is the collection of the Vedic scriptures. The Sama Veda is its specialised text-book; the ancient Rishis are its most ancient and primary Professors of Music, and The High Gods of the Hindu Pantheon its musical stars, its virtuosos, its prima donnas, its orchestral conductors.

Mahadeva, the High God Himself, beats the time for the universal Opera. He does not wield a stick in the manner of Western conductors but gives the time, sets the rhythms, beats out the *tala* on his drum. It is the small and dainty *damru* model of the drum family, significantly shaped like a sand-glass by which we in these days in Western family life measure the time for boiling an egg! In Hindu sacred lore the world is compared to an egg, and Siva (Mahadeva), the god who corresponds to Saturn, measures out the length of time for the performance of the world symphony and its varied component movements. A modern British Com-

<sup>1</sup> Published in the *Musical Courier*, 1928.

poser, Holst, has most strikingly portrayed this same symbolic myth of East and West in the section entitled 'Saturn' of his orchestral Symphonic Poem, 'The Planets'. His use there of drum effects and re-iterant pulsating rhythms is arresting and unique in the extreme. It carries out the idea of the ancient myths of India regarding the role of the First and Last of the Gods as the Hans Richter of India's symbolic orchestra. Then there is the Goddess Saraswati, vina player par excellence. What Orpheus was to Greece Saraswati is to India. The great educationists of Greece equated music with knowledge and taught the young the science and art of music in all its branches before it started to train the *reasoning* faculties in youth. In India Saraswati is revered as the patron of knowledge and her instrument is the Queen of India's orchestra. She is indeed to it what the first violin, leader of the orchestra, is to the opera musicians of the West, and the vina, millenia more ancient than the violin, may justly consider itself the Mother of the whole family of the stringed instruments.

It may of course be that the vina was the ultimate perfection of a series of experiments in stringed instruments that began when Brahma, the creator of world substance, gave the *tambura* to the God Narada. If so the *tambura*, instrument of individualism, of egoism, played its part in the world music story for it was the note that heralded always the presence of the mischief-maker. We see it today still in the hand of the wandering ascetic. There it is, the simple long neck of wood sticking through a gourd at one end and at the other a tuning peg or two, and stretched between the ever-twanging and plucked string in its simplest form,

or three strings in its more developed model. It was the tambura which supplied the constant sruti or keynote drone for all singers up to the ill-starred advent of the portable harmonium. There is not yet given out the name of the god or demon to whom this last-named instrument of torture is ascribed, but it wasn't one of the Celestials!

Who does not know of Krishna and his flute? I think the flute is the most universal and the most loved instrument in the land of Bharatavarsha. From Brindavan in the North to the goat-boy of the sandy stretches of South India the strains of the flute may be heard in the dawn. There is the simple reed of bamboo. Reader, have you ever tried to produce its haunting tones? It is anything but an easy instrument to play. Any instrument manipulated by the breath is difficult to master. And yet the child-herds following the example of the young god Krishna, are exponents of its simple and poignant pastoral beauty, and an expert flautist will draw a larger audience to his recital than an expert vina-player. Orpheus with his lute, Krishna with his flute, charm the hearts of man and beast in East and West, and to the present day the flute still leads the wood wind section of the highly developed Western orchestra.

Other wind instruments has India got with which nothing in the West can compare. There is the nageswara, the snake trumpet or oboe, with its piercing colourful quality of intricate runs and weird long notes. Its favourite time for rehearsal is 4-30 a.m. so it is not a favourite with dwellers in India who hail from the West! But to a trained instrumentalist or student of musical instruments it is an instrument with as promising a future as it has a notable past. It is the speciality

of temple worship and of marriage ceremonies, the mouthpiece of the Wise Ones, the Sages named Nagas.

Another remarkable instrument is the ten-foot trumpet which is to be found in far Northern India. This has a telescopic mechanism and unscrews in sections. When played it is carried horizontally usually by a little boy holding the open end, while ten feet behind him the player drives his breath through the mouthpiece. A tone is emitted which one can only compare with what one imagines must be the tone of the earth as it spins on its axis. It is an elemental sound, gloriously deep and full and satisfying, so dignified that one could not play tricks with it, or use it in anything but the most respectful fashion. The same is the case with the large conch shell so constantly heard in Buddhist monasteries, and used also for invocation purposes by orthodox Hindus. The oboe-like instrument which is used for maintaining one constant note is a sort of tragic clown of instruments. The fully blown-out cheeks of the player cannot fail to strike one humourously. They look so much like an eternal paper bag blown up and ready for clapping on so as to release the projectile of a sudden explosive sound. But the sound produced by the player is the antithesis of the whimsical desires of the spectator. It is weird and uncanny in its sustained monotonous persistence and one grows to equate it also with funeral music though it is not used exclusively for that purpose. In North India these oboes are beautiful specimens of art and craft being made of brass and copper finely carved and ornamented with precious stones, the turquoise being the most common.

The great ornateness of the instruments of India is a

noticeable characteristic of the Indian orchestra. In Western life our instruments, like our clothes, lack the beauty of the fine artistic appearance which Indian craftsmanship in metals, wood or ivory, give to the Indian instruments.

India is such a musical land that its people whether rich or poor, educated or illiterate, must have song and accompanying instruments. I possess a strange harp used by the women of the hill tribes of North Arcot Districts. It is a rectangular frame strung across with small flattened out bamboos. The different ways in which these are linked together give them a variety of tones when plucked by the nail and I can well imagine the beauty of the sound when a large number of village women play these in unison as they make their dance movements.

Another quaint possession of mine is an instrument made a short length of bamboo with a indiarubber mouthpiece at one end and a section of buffalo horn at the other. The sound produced through this primeval Dravidian Horn is the note that keeps one awake during the harvest season when watchers sit at night in raised small covered platforms and play to scare away hungry animals or robbers from the crop. Even the very earth is pressed into the musical family. The simple earthenware *chatti* (pot) is made to produce quite a number of tones according to the way it is played as a percussion instrument. Play it with the finger-tips and one quality of sound is produced, slap it with your palm and it responds fittingly, press it suddenly against your 'tummy' (of course in some specially skilled way) and it bellows forth a note of entirely different tone and character. Infinite are the musical possibilities of a

pot. I marvel that Omar Khyyam did not include them. If he had heard the Hindu pot-player by whom I have been raised to enthusiasm he could not have failed to sing the praises of the pot as a maker of music.

Amongst the favourite accompaniments of the voice are cymbals. One can find them of every size in the Indian orchestra. The size regulates the purposes for which they are used. Sometimes it is to punctuate long phrases, sometimes seemingly to wake you up, but the little brass ones are like the castanets of the Spanish, just rhythmic time-keepers. I probably write as a Philistine. These are but impressions made on a student and lover of all forms of musical expression. The expression of one's ignorance is often a goad to the knower and teacher, and produces information which is not forthcoming otherwise!

In Central and North India one meets with instruments not played at all in South India. There are the sitars of various sizes and depths of tone, always expressive. The first really good performance of Indian music I heard was the playing of two such sitars as we sat in the moonlight on the wide verandah of Srimathi Sarojini Naidu's home in picturesque Hyderabad. Their entirely strange combinations of tones and intervals and their freedom from the reiterant accents of Western music intrigued me like a new flavour or a unique perfume or the vision of an unknown land. Similarly there is an entirely distinctive quality of tone-colour about the escharaj, the instrument popular in Bengal. It is on an escharaj that Rabindranath Tagore's musician nephew plays and perpetuates all the great poet's songs, for it is well for us to remember that every new Indian



poem is not only a composition in words but in music, the verse and the melody being a simultaneous act of creation. The dilruba is a fretted instrument played by a bow and is favoured by Mahratta people.

The Sarangi is another favourite Northern instrument. The best collection of India's varied and valuable musical instruments is on exhibition in the Calcutta Museum, an exhibition which makes a Western composer of orchestral music green with envy for he can imagine what telling new combinations and effects of tone-colour he could, through many of them, introduce to the Western concert-hall. It is wise for us to recollect that the instruments which compose a Javanese orchestra are totally different from those of India or of Western nations. Each orchestra reflects something of the psychology of the race which has created these instruments. The music of India has been individualistic. There is a leader and a follower; there is little truly concerted playing in which each instrument gives its own contribution of individual expression to the whole. Accordingly there is no harmony; the instruments must play within the three octaves that comprise the range of musical expression of the human voice. If the instrument demands a voice and expression of its own it will be allowed only during some moments of solo work while the voice rests. Therefore the Indian orchestra in combination whatever be its numbers, is essentially a derivative of the music of the human voice and in a sense cannot be said to have come as yet into its own kingdom. The impact on the minds of musicians and of the public of gramophone records and broadcasting of the music of other systems both East and West must inevitably give a new ideal to the playing of Indian

instruments, both singly and in combination. One looks forward to an Indian orchestra in the future playing completely differently from the barbers' band which now goes along playing in unison the same old tunes—a favourite tune picked up from some Western bandmaster of thirty years ago being 'Sweet Marie' which is played alike at weddings, funerals and dramas without any idea of aesthetic effect. But this will change, and with the change which is undoubtedly coming over the psychology of the Indian people as a whole there will arise a need for forms of musical expression in which many people can join actively and yet with their own distinctive characteristics, and this will prelude the expansion of the Indian orchestra from its limited latency into powerful patency of emotional effects through that unity of the orchestra which includes diversity of types of sound, of rhythm, of pitch of sound, and of melodic outline. I believe that Indian music will evolve the art of writing melodies which play about amongst one another concordantly rather than laboriously develop Western harmony of the Handel and Beethoven type. A proof of this is to be found in the concerted music of a Javanese orchestra, which has relationship with India but is utterly unlike a Western band.

India has instruments of very beautiful and expressive tone. It is the genius for fusion that strikes one as lacking. There is plenty of time in Indian philosophy for experiments and developments, and I for one believe I hear them coming to enrich the harmonious relationships of the peoples within India, and to bring added reverence from the outside world to India as the Land of Music which it undoubtedly is.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGIN OF WESTERN MUSIC

The poet

Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods,  
Since nought so stockish, hard and full of rage,  
But music for the time doth change his nature.

*The Merchant of Venice*—Shakespeare

ACCORDING to Greek legend Orpheus was the son of Oengreus, king of Thrace, and Calliope, the goddess-daughter of Apollo and Muse of epic poetry. Thus he was both human and Divine by nature. He was wondrously beautiful and radiant in person, a lover of Nature, a devotee and reformer of the Solar Mysteries connected with Phoibos-Apollo, the mystic Iacchus, and an opponent of the lunar Mysteries connected with Bacchus and Demeter, deities of earth.

He is depicted as always carrying a lyre, and so magically sweet was his singing and playing that trees and beasts used to follow him, and it was potent even to pierce through into the world of spirits. When his wife, Eurydice, whom he loved passionately, died from snake-bite he followed her to Hades, found her there by the power of his music and would have succeeded in bringing her back to earth but for his secretiveness and want of faith in her. These prevented him from telling her that the condition imposed on him for her rescue was that he should not look on her. When owing to his strange behaviour she reproached him saying his love for her

had changed, he, fearing she would not come with him, turned to see if she was following him, at which act of disobedience she was again withdrawn to Persephone and he had to return to earth alone. His grief for her caused him to treat with contempt the Thracian women, who, it is told, in revenge tore him to pieces under the excitement of the Bacchanalian orgies. His dismembered parts were sewn together by Demeter—Mother Nature—but his head and lyre floated down the river Hebrus to Antissa in Lesbos, where Western music is held to have taken its origin, and where certainly the first school of music was founded by Terpander.

Occult investigators say that this Orpheus was the second of the name, that there had been a previous Orpheus who had founded the original Mysteries of Apollo, and who was the founder of the great Celtic race, one of whose predominant characteristics is the love of Music and all the Fine Arts. The details of this Orpheus are lost in the mists of time and it is with the life of the semi-historic Orpheus who lived five centuries before Homer (1300 B.C.) that this study will concern itself.

The influence of this Orpheus was primarily national. By his restoration of the Mysteries of Apollo to their highest ideal as they had probably been instituted by the first Orpheus, but which by this time had degenerated into sense-orgies dedicated to Bacchus, this 'Culture-Hero', as Rhys calls him, brought into being the Soul of Greece. His was the spiritual formative power which gave Greece its national self-consciousness. He found it soiled by superstition and lust, he left it purified and regenerated, having esoterically as well as

physically raised the Mysteries from the dark woods at the foot of the mountain to its sunlit peak. In place of frantic enthusiasm and unrestrained pleasure he substituted an ascetic purity of life and manners linked to the love of the beauty of Nature and Art, especially as manifested in Music.

Orpheus is known to have been the first to use music in the Mystery rites of Apollo and the Muses: he was the Initiator into the Mysteries of Music itself: the Hierophant of Beauty, true prototype of the Celtic Romance nations who live more in the emotional and mental worlds than on the material plane, and who conquer their grosser passions by their desire for the intangible objects of adoration—Colour, Form, Rhythm and Sound. Such importance did this great leader of the Race attach to Music that the later Greeks considered it as intimately allied with the very existence of all social order.

Enriched by the heritage of Beauty bestowed upon it by Orpheus, Greece continued to shine as the brightest jewel in the diadem of the nations, and even when, unable to combine powerful physical force with the culture of the Arts, she was conquered by Rome, the more material nation of her time, then 'captive Greece took captive her rude conquerors', and became the dispenser of artistic inspiration to all the Western world. The influence of Orpheus thus became international as well as national.

With regard to the occult school founded by Orpheus for his disciples the similarity between Orphism and Pythagoreanism has been noted from the time of Herodotus to the most modern writers. The Orphic school was noted under the rule of Pisistratus in Athens, in

the sixth century B.C. with Onomacritus as its poet. The followers of the school led an ascetic life, performed purificatory rites, abstained from flesh-eating and certain other kinds of food, wore special kinds of clothes, including a saffron-coloured armlet, and conformed with numerous other practices and abstinences. They held a mystical, speculative theory of religion and had a peculiar ritual of worship which prohibited blood-sacrifices. Their philosophy taught the unity of all living things, transmigration of souls, the imprisonment of the soul in the body, and the belief in its liberation through rebirth. The Orphic and Elusinian Mysteries were open equally to men and women for there was no disqualification of sex recognised in spiritual matters, and the Greek writers state that the finest men and women in Greece were lay disciples of Orpheus and his followers.

The art of music which Orpheus consecrated to the service of the Gods is the art of invocation. It calls the Devas into its presence as surely as the striking of a match produces a flame; they are both the effects of increased vibration, the creations of Light and Rhythm. Orpheus knew the added power of blessing which these messengers of Beauty would give to the performance of religious ceremonies, and the example he set should be followed by all who are seeking to make easier 'the path of the Lord'. Healing by the power of music was a science in the Orphic school, an aspect of music that has, alas, fallen into the realm of forgotten skills. Orpheus knew that music is also the art of evolution, calling up the highest and the best in each individual, 'toning up' the various sheaths of the Soul, drawing the mind from the personal to the great Impersonal Oversoul, 'harmonising' outer differences, and

creating the desired emotion of being 'in tune with the Infinite'.

'Orpheus with his lute made trees  
And the mountain-tops that freeze  
Bow themselves when he did sing.  
To his music plants and flowers  
Ever sprung, as sun and showers  
There had made a lasting spring.  
Everything that heard him play,  
Even the billows of the sea  
Hung their heads, and then lay by.  
In sweet music is such art,  
Killing care and grief of heart  
Fall asleep, or hearing, die.'

Art and spirituality should be one, taught the supreme Orpheus. The greatest painters of East and West were the monks: ~~the~~ greatest music is probably to be found in the Masses of Palestrina and in Wagner's *Parsifal*; and it has been a Theosophist composer, the Russian, Scriabine, who has led the way in exploring new possibilities in music in his tone-poem, *Prometheus*. The perfected Art of Religion will only be reached by those who are also followers of the Religion of Art.

'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty; that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Music, which Orpheus chose as his symbol, represents harmony and the consonance of part with part. Through the five strings of his lyre he brought forth the harmonious relationships of this fivefold world, making melody out of the five senses of present humanity by using only the pentatonic scale, that mode in

which the great majority of Celtic folk-songs (Scotch and Irish) are composed.

It is significant that the lyre in those olden days was made in the resemblance of a bull's head, the uprights of the instrument being called the 'horns'. It was thus fashioned because Dionysius, with whom the Orphic rites were connected, was called the Bull-faced, and in the degraded ceremonies of Bacchus, the lower aspect of Apollo-Dionysus, a bull was sacrificed every year. This symbol links itself at once to the Zodiacal sign Taurus, which is the recognised sign in Astrology of the singer, as it governs the throat, and is ruled by Venus, the planet of Beauty. It also represents latent desire which has to become positive and controlled in its opposition sign, Scorpio, before the latter can show its influence as the Regenerator. In Taurus, thus equated with the symbol of Orpheus, there is found the latent ideal of the Word of Power (through the throat), of creation without sex-desire, of pure love, of lyric sweetness and beauty combined with strength and steadfastness; but it is only by conquering the opposites of these qualities made manifest in Scorpio—strong sexual passion, secretiveness, the stinging word of sarcasm, lack of faith shown by an ultra-critical attitude—that the Orphic disciple realises to the full the essence of the mystic Bacchus and attains to the knowledge of the Taurus sign in its higher octave of manifestation. In the realm of music, when that stage is reached, it will reflect itself in a system of harmony wherein each part will be fully melodic, wherein no part will be merely subservient to another: it will be the old art of counterpoint freed and sublimated, a combination of individualism and co-operation. What inspiring Orphic hymns



will be composed in those days, when even our present feudal system of harmony in hymnology produces upliftment in so many people!

The symbol of Orpheus,—the lyre with the horns, the star, sun and circle—may be found, on the title-page of any piece of music published in the well-known Peter's Edition (Leipzig). Thus intimately and continuously does the influence of Orpheus pervade even minor details of our present-day life.

Orpheus predominantly represents the mystical artist type of the Celtic branch of the Aryan root race, not the metaphysician of the Indian (Hindu) branch, not the scientist of the Teutonic branch, but the articulator of the emotions in their natural language—poetry and music. All art is essentially one, as Orpheus taught by his love of Nature and his power over it by sound. His dismemberment at his death allegorises the separation of the Arts into compartments, each art jealously holding to its own specialised form, yet eventually the mother Demeter, Intuition, will gather them all together into a single inclusive new Art-Form. One remembers that the separation into parts arose from the failure of the spiritual artist (not then fully perfected) to pass his test. His faith in the Inner Guide was not sufficient, his confidence in his Beloved was incomplete; lacking these he trusted his eyes, he attached himself to the outer form rather than to obedience to the Divine command, and every artist knows that one loses the creative artistic impulse when the lower mind becomes enmeshed in the details of form.

The artist of today is still wandering in incompleteness, seeking the Eurydice of the Soul. Only when Beauty again consciously and fully becomes the handmaid of the

Spirit, when Art becomes the expression of true religion, when Harmony is breathed forth from every act of the consecrated life, when one is one's own High Priest and Artist, Leader and Server, Musician and Lyre, will the influence of Orpheus on his followers be accomplished, and the widespread descendants of the Celtic race, still the most numerous in Western civilisation, reach the solar heights to which Orpheus sought to lead it, and Music reach the power which he wielded. Then will the sound thereof reach the ends of the earth.

## CHAPTER X

### THE BEGINNINGS OF WESTERN MUSIC

And ever against eating cares  
Lap me in soft Lydian airs  
Married to immortal verse  
Such as the meeting soul may pierce  
In notes, with many a winding bout  
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,  
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,  
The melting voice through mazes running,  
Untwisting all the chains that tie  
The hidden soul of harmony.

*L'Allegro*—Milton

THE origin of the Art of Music is lost in antiquity. Probably expression in music of the feelings of the human race develops as naturally and as unconsciously in its earlier stages as the evolution of spoken speech. It also develops its own racial characteristics dependent on throat formation, temperament, climate, and countless formative influences bearing on both vocal and instrumental expression. Thus the older the civilisation the older its system of music. The Western world knows practically nothing of the elaborate systems of music, all different from one another, which legitimately call themselves Japanese, Chinese, Javanese, Siamese, Burmese, Indian, Arabian, Aztec and Egyptian, every one distinct from the other.

There is much to be done to make the riches of all these systems in tonality, melody, rhythm, timbre and psychological content and effect interchangeably known amongst the students, exponents and lovers of all these various languages of music,—music which is itself the universal language of the emotions.

The scientific inventions of Western civilisation and its power of salesmanship have flooded the world with Gramophone Records and Radio Broadcasting of Western music. The imperialistic regime of certain colonising Western races has supplemented or preceded this influence by employing their own military bands for the edification of their subject races. In this way the Hindus talk of 'English' music and the East Indians of Sumatra and Java think of all Western music as 'Dutch' music.

But to a musician who has had the privilege of hearing a number of the Oriental types of music there is no doubt that in comparison with them the music of Europe and the Americas is one single type and is best designated 'Western' music in contrast to 'Eastern' or 'Oriental' music.

The development of the music of Europe can be traced through a number of definite eras with definite dates in its history. A short resume of these cannot but be useful to an oriental student of music, while it should not prove uninteresting either to the general amateur of Western music who only too seldom refreshes his or her memory about the past of the Art whose beauty in the present gives such pleasure.

Early Greek literature makes frequent allusion to music, and the God Orpheus used music as his most potent charm over beasts, mortals and celestials almost succeeding in recovering his beloved Euridice from the region of Death by the sweet strains of his lyre.

Orpheus with his lute made trees  
And the mountain tops that freeze  
Bow themselves when he did sing.  
To his music plants and flowers

Ever sprung, as sun and showers  
There had made a lasting spring.

*John Fletcher*

This is however considered legendary and mythological. It is historical fact, however, that about 500 B.C. Pythagoras after his travels in India systematised the primitive music of his times and gave it new vitality by standardising its sound combinations into seven scales which were developed downwards, not upwards, in selections of the combinations and permutations of seven sounds out of the twelve semitones in an octave which have formed ever since the fundamental sound substance of European music. These seven scales are identical with seven of the *melakartas* (scales) used in South Indian music, and it is noteworthy that Strabo has written that Pythagoras was influenced by India in the reforms and developments he made in the music of his time. At that date quite a number of instruments were played, chiefly as accompaniments for the voice. These included the pipe, lyre, zither, flute and Aeolian harp. The accompaniments were played in either fifths or unison. The songs were akin in nature to primitive folk-song. In these the melody proceeds by small steps, very rarely having any leaps, and often including intervals smaller than our minor second, which infers at that time a more finely trained ear than we have today. The uncivilised hordes of North Germany and Scandinavia had evolved their own kind of folk-music, and even so long ago as 1000 B.C. they employed a species of trumpet called 'luren', seven feet long, which gave a beautifully smooth tone. In all this music there was an element of mystery. It was used for ceremonial evocation to

the powers of the Unknown. Percussion, the use of drums, played a large part in it even as it does in authentic folk-music to the present day.

After the year A.D. 500 with the growth of the influence of Christianity the influence of Hebrew melody became interfused with the truly Greek development of music. A preference showed itself for the major scale known then as the Ionian Mode. An instrumental accompaniment called the 'Organum' and consisting of a sliding parallel harmony of fifths and octaves, is mentioned by Johann Scotus Erigena about A.D. 1050. It was then also that Antiphony was introduced—alternate groups of singers singing the verses of the composition.

Parallel with the music which was being used for religious purposes the wandering bards or minstrels called the 'troubadours' developed the art of singing ballads for the entertainment of the country folk. It actually took five centuries (from the eleventh to the sixteenth century) for these musicians to popularise the use of thirds and sixths below the melody as its accompaniment under the chaperonage still of the 'Drone Bass', what is called the 'Sruti' in India. The introduction of these harmonies made music more elastic and free, and gave it specially a quality of romance.

Two famous Popes, Gregory and Ambrose, advanced music a step further by making collections of all the chants used in Church music. The old Greek modes had by this time been reduced to three only out of the original seven. These are still called 'Gregorian Chants' and retain the minor seventh interval which gives them an air of remoteness and reserve. These are the melakar-tas known in Indian Carnatic music as Natthabkairavi,

Hanuma Todi. Right up to A.D. 1400 the Church remained opposed to the introduction of polyphony or independent parts accompanying the melody. It considered that such innovations savoured of licence and levity. There is a somewhat similar school of thought amongst some Oriental nations which regard any movement from the traditional and conservative as inviting perdition. They foresee only ruin as resulting from anything new. They forget that change is a law of life, and that lack of change is only another name for stagnation. But the stream and flow of Life cannot long be stemmed by even the most orthodox of forces. And so it was with the great Latin Church. After denying progress to the development of music for centuries suddenly the emergence of a great musical genius, Palestrina, brought Counterpoint (sounds against sounds) right into the music of the Mass, and laid the foundation of Modern European and Western music. There is a sect of Protestants in Scotland who are still so fossilised in their puritanism that they will not permit any kind of harmonium, organ or accompanying musical instrument to be installed in their churches. It was a similar fossilised and conservative mentality that held back the progress of the Western music for several centuries, but the unconventionality of the lives, and the musical expression of romance voiced by the wandering minstrels and outlaws of the period of stagnation in Church music brought about a development of music by which a melody was interwoven with other melodies, and put together with such art and science that the resulting effect was harmonious and pleasing. This later became the noble method of composition in Western music called 'counterpoint'.

The music of the troubadours was secular and it produced a school of beautiful part-songs called 'Madrigals' written for from four to eight different parts, for voices of different pitch. England was famous for its madrigal composers between A.D. 1300 and A.D. 1500 but the influence of Flemish musicians was predominant in this aspect of the rapidly evolving art.

The Catholic Church called these singers and players 'children of the devil'. Even when a player of a musical instrument was violently assaulted the law of the land allowed him in return to strike 'only the shadow of his tormentor'. The churches cursed the wandering minstrels in much the same way as until quite recently actors and actresses were designated 'wastrels and vagrants' in English law.

But these same minstrels were the favourites of the Royal Courts of Europe, and in the fifteenth century they got even preferential treatment in the Courts of Law. It is recorded for instance that anyone who hurt the hand of a harp-player was punished four times as severely as one who injured any other freeman. It was the people of Northern Europe, the descendants of the Druids, worshippers of the Sun, who poured warmth into the music of the Roman Church, the cult of Death and asceticism, whose music was like its churches, granitic, hard, fixed, stolid, all songs in unison and without any accompanying instruments.

The sixteenth century has been called the 'Golden Age of Music'. The genius of the masterly Palestrina was able to combine the finest developments of both Church and minstrel music, and from their marriage produce the inspiring Masses which still hold the ear



of the Western world. He employed all the devices and science of counterpoint with a perfect sense of euphony, and fitness of expression for the words. With his advent the Muse turns its back on the archaic school. He employed parts moving independently, with varying rhythms. Yet such was the depth and perfection of his style; so ascetic, classical, authoritative, disciplined, and truly vocal, were his musical settings of the great rituals of the Catholic Church and so patent their religious and sincere aim, that they swept all opposition before them then and ever since in their special class of musical expression. His great masses are without instrumental accompaniment but their polyphonic and contrapuntal composition gives them a richness of harmony unknown before then and rarely excelled since. Palestrina died in Rome in 1594. What he did for the enrichment of religious music Claude Monteverde did for secular music. He was the first composer of Operas, though the name of the first Opera ever sung sounds more like a religious than a secular subject: 'The Soul in the Body'. This musical medium for the expression of romantic emotions opened a new era in Western music. Monteverde boldly used many new chords and intervals. He impatiently struck discords without preparing the ear in advance for the harsh sound. He combined Choruses with Arias (Solos). He introduced the use of an orchestra, and experimented with the tone-colour of the instruments. He was a man who was a law unto himself and he was the initiator of nearly all the innovations of harmony, recitative, and operatic architecture which characterised the music of the next two centuries. So fundamental were the contributions made by Claude Monteverde to the art that

he has been called 'the father of modern music', his long life (1528-1643) as well as his arduous and original service to music rightly entitling him to the honoured name. The period between A.D. 1200 and A.D. 1650 is extraordinarily interesting to musicians all the world over because it marks the great cleavage between the music of the Orient and the Occident. The East today is still opposing development along the line of harmony and independent instrumentalism. It is in the mood of the Church worthies and the classicists in Italy in the thirteenth century. For a Western musician of today to think away our present harmonic preconceptions and to go back to an age of monody only is the most violent piece of mental gymnastics in artistic experience. It is the absence of all harmony that makes Indian music monotonous, thin and unpalatable to Western ears. It is the presence of harmony that makes Western music a confused jumble, frivolous, and restless, to Eastern ears. Thus the hemispheres are continuing the struggle which was in these centuries focussed in Italy. It is well to remember that the music of Europe was similar to that of the Orient before the thirteenth century. Will the Orient evolve harmony from its own roots?

By A.D. 1200 singers in groups were weaving melodies called 'parts' against one another with varying rhythms. By the beginning of the fifteenth century the laws of counterpoint were substantially fixed. Then the style was a type of musical asceticism of pure polyphony. The effect was produced by masses of voices unaccompanied divided into groups ranging from two to eight in number making melodies and weaving sound patterns between one another through an exquisite continuity of

flow incompatible with any rigidity of harmony or free rhythm.

The seventeenth century saw a revolution against this concerted discipline. Individualism demanded its rights. The solo voice demanded to be heard. The newly invented instruments pushed themselves forward. It took three generations of experimentors to mould the beginnings of harmony in the contrapuntal style under the authority and discipline of the Church from its purely polyphonic style into the free romantic, dramatic art of non-counterpoint and the vertical style of harmony.

The Renaissance spirit then abroad undoubtedly fostered the break with the old style. The beauty of the first opera, 'Eurydice' by Peri in A.D. 1600 was a searchlight which revealed how happily the emotions of the romantically-minded could be expressed in the new, free medium, and accordingly this new mood of life hailed the advent of harmony, solo singing, the dramatic form of music, the addition of instruments as a painter might welcome a new colour for his palette. Such crises come to all arts and all countries. In Asia the art of music in the various countries is experiencing at the present time a crisis, a re-valuation, a re-orientation very similar to the struggle here described. The growth of the emotions, and their need for a fuller medium of expression will lead the great art of Music forward as it did most strikingly and successfully in Europe.

Imitation is alone the dread tempter and enemy. Italy was true to her own emotional growth and thus her roots sent forth new branches which have beautified the world.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE MAN MAKES THE MUSIC

A tone

Of some world far from ours  
Where music and moonlight and feeling are one.

*To Jane—Shelley*

LOOKING back over the development of music in the Orient and the Occident since A.D. 1600 the secret of the difference in their comparative speed of progress seems to resolve itself into the ordering of Fate by which in Europe giant geniuses of Music appeared in each nation as gifts of the Gods, whereas there is no record of a similar boon having been vouchsafed to the nations of Asia.

During the last three hundred years the national music of Japan, as revealed by the music of the Noh Drama Opera, has remained practically stagnant. It is a wonderful product and aspect of musical expression in itself, but it is a fossil. Similarly with classical music in India: save for two great names—Tansen in Akbar's time and Thygaraja about a hundred years ago, no great genius of the Nearer East has written his name across the world in sweet sound.

But in Europe in the same year (A.D. 1685) two such giants in genius as Bach and Handel were born. Bach is known as the 'Master of Masters' and achieved the Apex of a Counterpoint which was a fusion of the ancient musical method of five previous centuries with the new system of harmony, and the setting free of pure romantic emotion into the Mass itself. Handel

was supreme in choral writing: first famous as the creator of dozens of Operas and then turning round and creating an equal number of world-conquering Oratorios.

Johann Sebastian Bach has an especial interest for Eastern musicians as it was he who deliberately created what was called the well-tempered Clavier, in other words, he standardised the method of tuning the clamped instruments of the day, the clavier (precursor of the piano), and the organ, in such an artificial manner that the twelve semitones are as nearly equidistant as possible. This created the immense and basic difference in tuning which is a characteristic of Western music. All Eastern musicians use the 'natural' method of tuning by fifths. The result is that the musicians of both hemispheres are now bothered by what seems to them the out-of-tuneness of the other. It is almost certain that the equal temperament of the Occident will be only transitional, as are all artificial expedients when contrasted with fundamental laws of nature. The change effected by Bach consolidated the Western system and especially made possible the wonderful strides which took place in harmony and in instrumentation.

The best-known work of Handel is the oratorio 'The Messiah' which was a dramatic setting of the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, told by solo singers linked together by some of the most sublime choruses in all the literature of music. Protestantism was still very Puritan in 1700, and for the general public in Protestant countries this new method of presenting Biblical stories without scenery and without gesture, yet with full emotional effect in the music itself, exactly suited

the needs and moods of the era, and still afford emotional safety-valve for millions of music-lovers, especially in English-speaking countries.

In the early nineteenth century there arose the King of Musicians, the mighty Beethoven, who did for the orchestra what Handel had done for sacred story-telling, what Bach had done for Organ and Counterpointal music, and what Palestrina had done for the Liturgy of the Catholic Church. Beethoven created the new channel of musical expression, the Symphony, music without words or programme, what is called 'abstract music', entirely played by instruments. He standardised the modern Orchestra with its groupings of wood, wind, brass and percussion instruments. He also perfected a new form of musical structure or architecture, the Sonata Form, which as a milestone in musical evolution may be paralleled with the form of the Kirthanam popularised in South India a century later by Thyagaraja. He was also the first great writer for the modern pianoforte. His great mind worked entirely in harmonic channels instead of counterpoint. Around these great figures were numbers of talented pioneers in all the paths which lay open before an enfranchised art, all writing in the eighteenth century and consolidating the gains each made, Rameau, Corelli, Couperin, Haydn, and the immortal precocity Mozart, the operatists Gluck and Puccini. It seemed as if a tidal wave of souls devoted to music had been poured into Italy, France, and Germany and Austria. In architecture, in painting, in sculpture, there had been similar incarnation periods of great creative geniuses, but these had passed. Music claimed its share in the eighteenth century, and because of the greatness of the men

there was the richness of development of the youngest of the arts. With the immense sweep and breadth of of Handel's choral style and emotional force, and with the classic architecture, and the power of Beethoven over musical material and the laws of sound, tone, and colour, it seemed as if the climax of music had been reached. But it was indeed far otherwise. As Pope says: 'Alps on Alps arise'. Again Germany brought forth a Titan in music, Richard Wagner, who revolutionised Opera writing. His was a cosmic sweep; his was a synthetic mind; his was a power to unite mythology, religion, romance, libretto, scenery, acting, solo virtuoso, choruses, counterpoint, harmony and individualism (the individual melody motive), orchestral effects, dancing, cosmology, as if he gathered everything into his plenary brain and sent it forth rejuvenated, re-incarnated, re-made. He was Shakespeare, Goethe, Dante, Kalidasa, merged, and set to music. He is the musical giant of the nineteenth century, his dates being 1813 to 1883.

His life is fascinating and inspiring. His scope was all-round. He wrote pamphlets on all kinds of subjects. He was an apostle of freedom for animals, artists and anarchists. This brought him into conflict with the German Government which exiled him from the Fatherland. His friends thought that this would ruin his career and for years he was in straits. But his musical friends were powerful and it seemed as if a complementary soul had been born at the same time though in another country to enable the Titan to bring his great new dreams into successful manifestation, namely, King Ludwig the Second of Bavaria, who invited Wagner to Bayreuth and put all means at his

disposal to build the kind of opera-house he needed, to gather together the best musicians and soloists, to have time enough and peace enough to brood over and create and sufficiently rehearse his magnificent conceptions and thus see his dreams and his reforms and advances carried out in the most ideal circumstances. All this is one of the world miracles of romance like the building of the Taj Mahal.

Through the individual contributions of these remarkable men Western music had thus within a space of two hundred years completely changed its character. Undoubtedly the change was also made possible by the strides that were also being made by science and invention. For instance, it was only in 1600 that the Violin was invented, and the experiments in violin-making of all sizes and tones resulted in the great violin family which became the backbone of the modern orchestra. There was also the great spread in education generally with a due appreciation in the musical nations of the value of education in music. There was improvement in publishing music. There was still in existence the system of private Patrons, such as that of Kings, Popes, Archdukes, etc. These gave a personal touch and a stability to the efforts of genius such as is much more difficult to achieve in these present days of submission of all new works to large audiences on whose variable taste box-office receipts rise or fall, and there 'money speaks'.

Also there were many private small orchestras maintained in the homes of the nobles of those days. The existence of these formed an incentive to the composers for the creation of string quartettes, trios, chamber-music of all descriptions. One finds in Java at the



present day a somewhat similar set of circumstances and it is one of the explanations of the vital state in which music, its definite own system of music, is found in the East Indian Islands, in Bali Island, for instance. The music of the gamelin orchestra is very distinctive, and very beautiful, utterly different from any kind of Western orchestra. Its family of brass gongs, from immense in size to finger-bowl size, give forth a tone colour and a tonality comparable only to the sighing sounds of the wind in trees or the falling of water from a height. The Muhammadan Princes give their full financial and personal support to the continuance and advancement of the Wyang Shadow Play with its accompaniments of classic, interpretative dance and its band of instrumental musicians.

In Japan also there is a national orchestra with instruments, combinations of tone colour, productions of sound both by voice and instruments of such a peculiar type that they seem the sound language of mythological entities, or the voices of the dwarf trees or grotesque beings portrayed in their Art.

When I made a world tour and was able to get an impression of the varieties of emotional expression that the music of these oriental countries are pouring into space my musical consciousness was enormously expanded. By comparison I was better able to evaluate the particular contribution that Western music has given to humanity. By its concentration on a few modes (the major and minor scales) and its acceptance of the tones and overtones of any sound, and its development of the sounding of these in unison according to scientific laws, the West created a musical kingdom of its own on, as it were, a small base, but with the intensity of its cul-

tivation it has been able to reach glorious heights of concerted music. In music as in other things the Occident has achieved 'mass production' within distinct limits of tonality and rhythm, but at the expense of qualities of extemporaneousness and fluidity that are found in other systems, and without the purely subjective self-expression of the spiritual nature which is characteristic of the individualistic Aryan music.

An art and a science with such vitality and popular support as Western music evinces will surely absorb great inspiration from the sources of the music of other parts of the world which the Radio and Broadcasting are just now beginning to bring to its hearing and attention. But it remains to be seen whether that can be accomplished without the birth and emergence of musicians of great genius such as illuminate the progress of European music in the past three centuries. History shows that the various arts bring along their own exponents, but after a time the supply of creators of that special *genre* seems to run dry. Will Western music meet the same fate?

Russia, I believe, will give the world further giants in musical evolution. Geographically, racially, artistically, spiritually, it is the bridge between Orient and Occident and we may anticipate that it will create the synthesis of the music of East and West. Its pioneer was Alexander Scriabine, the youngest of the Music Giants, who died in 1915 at the age of forty-three, after bringing down a new fire in his Tone-Poem 'Prometheus' to light a new path for the Art of Orpheus.

## CHAPTER XII

### A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EASTERN AND WESTERN MUSIC<sup>1</sup>

- Portia.*—<sup>6</sup>Music! Hark!  
*Nerissa.*—It is your music, madam, of the house.  
*Portia.*—Nothing is good, I see, without respect;  
Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.  
*Nerissa.*—Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.  
*Portia.*—The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark  
When neither is attended; and I think  
The nightingale if she should sing by day,  
When every goose is cackling, would be thought  
No better a musician than the wren.  
How many things by season season'd are  
To their right praise and true perfection.

*Merchant of Venice*—Shakespeare

MUSIC is pleasant to hear. Music is also pleasant to hear about. We usually hear a great deal of music but very little about it. Yet it is quite necessary to analyse music and to appreciate it with the intellect as well as with the feelings. True understanding enhances aesthetic enjoyment. Today we are searching for bases of common understanding between nations. Why not unite in the regions of the soul and the emotions which are the same whether the person look black, red, yellow or white, and whether of Eastern or Western origin? Every nation uses music to express its emotions. Therefore in music we have a strong and practical international link.

A journey through oriental countries will wonderfully enrich a Western musician who is a true student of the

<sup>1</sup> A Lecture delivered in Madras in 1926 under the Presidentship of Chief Justice Sir A. Coutts Trotter.

art, and who keeps his or her ears open to the songs to be heard in every town and home. It will at first induce an unexpected sense of ignorance and bewilderment about the art which had seemed so well-known. The mind must also have been kept open and unprejudiced. The concatenation of sounds and percussions that I heard in a Chinese entertainment seemed only laughable, but to an Arab the productions of a New York jazz band would seem equally absurd. Everyone is filled with a pride in his own assortment of symbols for intercommunication, and the unusual and unknown seems almost always at first sight or hearing bizarre and disagreeable. We are creatures of convention and limitation.

Travel is a great educator and expander. Once what would have been a most chafing hour's wait in a dusty, hot street in Beirut, Syria, became a college of music for me, for my chair on the footpath was placed outside a barber's shop which contained a gramophone, and as I waited for that expected bus to take me to Damascus, I was regaled with the best and most popular records of Egyptian music! So novel an opportunity had not previously been mine and the time sped all too quickly! In Baghdad also, my host's home was near one of the ubiquitous tea-houses which punctuate that dreamy city, and it also used a powerful gramophone to wile its patrons into it by strains of Arab song. How different each type of music was! How appreciated by the people to whom it was as well known as are Schubert's songs to me! Yet I could not get the expected reaction from them, as I also did not get it from the melodies of India for several years after I came to live in this country. Why? It was irritating and

humiliating to feel myself in the presence of a secret. I discovered later that in order to solve the secret it is necessary to have a humble heart divested of a superiority complex, to have a mind enlightened intellectually about the theoretical elements of the system of music one is hearing, and a patience in listening long enough and often enough to the new music for it to have made some kind of tangible track in one's memory and to have achieved some stability of resultant emotion. But I found that some reading matter on the subject of the elements of the theory underlying the national musical mother-tongue was for me the most helpful of all aids in appreciating it and in aligning myself with its emotion. The art of India has had my constant study for the last twenty years, but my recent travels in both Eastern and Western Asia have shown me that music all through the Orient has a basic similarity as contrasted with Western music, a similarity that reinforces what has been stated about Asia by students of its life from many different angles, namely that 'Asia is one'. So while I shall make my comparison particularly from my knowledge of Indian music, and in that of the Carnatic school of Indian music, the most classical and ancient, it will also be true of all indigenous Oriental song. I do not include Hawaiian music in the latter category as it is decidedly a hybrid product of the ancient Hula folk-song—cum-coon-cum-missionary hymn—tune-cum-American influences.

In the Orient music is essentially subjective. The whole art has been in existence thousands of years, and in practically the same state, because music has not been organised for objective purposes. Music is SONG and it has been handed down from teacher to pupil,

from parent to child, from priest to novice, by oral tradition. It is not written : it has not been disseminated by publication. It is the language of poetry : it is the chant of the devotee : it is comradeship with the very personal Gods of the Hindu Pantheon. It is not for concert rooms : it is either for the shrine or the sunrise or the sunset or the social religious ceremony. Being based on the self-sufficiency of the human voice the whole oriental world of music is vocal in essence, even at the present moment, and being individualistic it necessarily is melodic whereas melody in combination with harmony is the characteristic of music as evolved in Europe in cities with choirs, with inventive genius which produced many instruments of extended gamut and range of sound, and which produced its music for the entertainment of large audiences which a temperate climate allowed to collect in enclosed halls. One may generalise that oriental music is monistic, intuned, while western music is dualistic, outtuned. The substance of Eastern sound is remarkably different from ours. We usually connect our minor scales with sad or yearning emotional content, and more commonplace and joyful subject matter of our music with the major mode. Only a genius of Handel's calibre was so original and masterful as to compose the most well-known funeral march in the world in the key of C Major—the Dead March in 'Saul'!

As this major mode is only one out of many modes for Oriental musicians, and not at all one of their most admired modes, it follows that all their modes sound to us 'minor', and interpret themselves in our minds with sadness of some kind. This is an entirely erroneous mental attitude, for even scales with flattened

sevenths and doubled flattened sixths, or augmented fourths cheek by jowl with a flattened third, will convey to an oriental quite joyous emotion. Thus we fail to understand the symbolism of the oriental modes.

Indeed a basic difference between Indian and Western music is the specific qualities with which the different modes are endowed. The Western major scale with the seventh flattened is called Harikambodhi in North Indian nomenclature and is a mode reserved for performance at night. It has the quality of imploring. Bhairavi raga should be used in the dawn to express reverence. Hindol (the Swing)—C, D flat, E, F sharp, G, A sharp, B, C represents joy and merriment; Asaveri, C, D flat, E flat, F, G, A flat, B flat, C connotes tenderness and is used in the evening. On concert programmes it is only the name of the Ragam which is given. It was in a ragam simply printed 'Jivanpuri' that I once heard the famous Abdul Karim Khan melt half and quarter tones into one another with the effect of magic and with a pliability of voice and perfect intonation of the most difficult intervals and passages that I have never heard equalled in any part of the world. It was as if the sound were a tangible material of a glutinous or conjuring kind that could be pulled in or out, and all in terms of extraordinary syncopated and involved rhythms and abnormal feats of breath control.

It is the psychological atmosphere which envelopes the different modes that produced at one period of the evolution of Indian music a school of beautiful painting which gave visual expression to the ragas. Todi ragini is represented as a nymph leaning languorously in the midday glare, attracting all animals. Panchama raga depicts refreshment from a rain shower. Kedara raga is

6  
painted as a group of musicians in moonlight with an ascetic in their midst; the whole picture gives the effect of gaiety and sadness enwrapped in impermanence. The Chippewa Red Indians of North America are the only other people of whom I have information who draw pictures of their melodies which help them to interpret them aright.

I should note that the names of the above mentioned ragas are those used in North Indian or Hindustani music. It is one of the trials of studying Indian music that the nomenclature of the same ragas is different in North and South India. The Raga paintings all belong to North India and are much under the influence of the Persian or Moghul styles. They form a whole field of research and inspiration in themselves.

We Westerners depend for our sense of contrast very much on our device of modulation. This means nothing to an Easterner. Their contrast is based on the very many different ragams, modes, combinations, they employ very definitely and respectively to express different emotions. These are so very varied that the first part of the performance of any song is the display of the sound material which is to be used, the publication in sound, as it were, of the key-signature and mode. This is free extemporisation without words, a regular 'tuning in' process, and when it has been established no change is allowed from that particular sound medium for the whole length of that song, which has been known in India to continue for three hours. The power of improvisation is a sine qua non of an oriental musician. Each singer or player aims at creating embellishments, contrasts, variations, rhythmic devices at the call of the moment's inspiration. The musician is bound by no



printed page, by no fear of violating the sacred memory of some musician who may have given his original impress to the traditional root melody. This atmosphere of fluidity gives a freshness to oriental music that is absent from its sister system. No one would want to alter a note of Schumann's Blumist or Beethoven's Andante of the fifth Symphony, but to reproduce exactly the Kirthanam 'Tulsidas' of Thygaraja in South India exactly as he or one of his pupils sang it would be considered musical incompetence. India is like Japan in its admiration for the minute. A change in a single note, a shadowy turn of one phrase gives more satisfaction in variations upon a theme than an elaboration or reconstruction of the theme such as Brahms enjoyed. Similarly with the minuteness of interval. The quarter-tone in the right place is often the awaited climax of a whole composition. A parallel, but much cruder instance of this in Western music, is the minor seven included in the final chord in arpeggio of Chopin's Prelude in F Major, at which musicians looked askance for many long years.

Whereas the manipulation of sound as sound (loud or soft, volume, quality of voice, sonority, etc.) is largely the objective of a Western musician, it is of quite secondary importance to the general Eastern musician. Probably this is because of the subjective character of Eastern song. Primarily the latter is always for the Beloved, the One, whether that One be the God, or the human love, and privacy is one of the desired conditions. Consequently the 'science' and the emotion with which the song is sung takes a much higher place than what Westerners would call 'expression', variety in sound quality, which presuppose awareness of a cri-

tical audience. The quality of accompaniment to a song in the East is a source of bewilderment to a foreigner, for though it is true that the instruments such as violin, sitar, veena, samisen, rarely initiate any new matter outside what has been given forth by the melody, yet the accompaniment literally 'follows' it, and while orientals evidently have the faculty of hearing horizontally, we non-orientals naturally hear perpendicularly, and the disharmony of a 'canon', which is not a canon, harmonically or contrapuntally, is to us extremely disturbing and dissonant. Then, paradoxically, the percussion instruments of accompaniment, such as drums or cymbals seem to be utterly wayward, and do anything but 'follow' the melody. One can hear that the production of rhythmic effect is fearfully and wonderfully made on first hearing of the performance, but the percussion accompaniment seems to have nothing to do with the case.

This is entirely our ignorance, not the drummer's. In nothing is oriental music more rich than in its profusion of rhythm. Its number of time signatures alone is rhythmic wealth. We may be listening to a piece of which the number of beats in a bar is eleven, and part of the science and art will be to vary the method of emphasising the accents of combinations within this eleven according to the mood of the piece or the drummer. It is impossible for a novice in the art to realise how the intricacy agrees with the melody. It is a very fine and a highly polished and evolved art and it offers great fields for development and enrichment of Western music when it has been thoroughly studied and applied. Oriental musicians of eminence have assured me that they find the constant emphasis on the first beat of the bar of Western music at such short and to them banal

distances as three, four, or six beats in a bar, very monotonous and boring.

The subject matter of Eastern music is rarely what we call 'abstract'. It is essentially 'romantic' yet rarely 'sentimental'. Perhaps the Persian 'gazels', love-songs, are the most ravishing in the world, yet one could never call them 'sentimental'. There is a strange impersonality mixed with their subjectivity, and one never seems to hear an appeal 'to the gallery'. Perhaps this is because the East associates its gods so intimately with its song.

Yet here again comes another paradox of Asia—the great and widespread faith of Muhammadanism excludes music from its religious ritual, save that the muezzin from his high tower chants an invocation at dawn and sunset calling the faithful to prayer, and very poignant these beautiful high-pitched yearnings sound in the half-lights. Right through the ages as in the West there has been a struggle between two schools of thought, the one that looks on music as one of the pathways to realisation of the Divinity within each, and the other which looks on music as a temptation away from the spiritual to the worldly. Buddhism took the latter view long before Muhammad banned music from the mosques, and sweet sound got into the pagodas of Ceylon, Burma and Japan only through the delectable temple bells, deep-toned or tremulous in the wind.

Europe very quickly gave the musician an honoured place in its social and educational spheres. India at one time also must have done so, as tradition has made each of the gods of the Indian pantheon an exponent of some aspect of music, but during the last two hundred years at least the standing of musicians has fallen

deplorably low. The payment offered to them either as soloist entertainers or as teachers is incredibly low, and the lack of honour shown socially to first-class virtuosos used to make me blush with shame and indignation when I first came to the East. The rigidity of class or caste system had much to do with this, and a great change for the better has come in the last ten years. Still the contrast between the East and West in this particular is very striking and is one of the root reasons for the stagnation and degeneration which is visible in the indigenous music of certain oriental races. Patronage, appreciation, honour are essentials in the environment of artists. These are given freely in the West; but withheld or given grudgingly generally in Asia.

In India this is all the more inexplicable because the genius of Indian music is its spontaneous expression of love of God. Its psychological content is of a high order; its subject matter is elevated, yet its exponent is degraded. How different from the case of Gilbert and Sullivan for instance, whose words and music were wholly superficial and amusing, but who were raised to the peerage in England! Perhaps the fact that there is in the East no recognised authority on music such as a Conservatoire, or an Academy of Music, or public examinations in music, is one of the reasons for the pitiful status of the Eastern professional musician. However, if he or she happens to be a saint with musical genius the highest honours will be accorded, but without any monetary value. In this way it seems to emerge that the psychology of India at least views the art of music not as a primary art, but as a complementary art, the handmaiden, the sister of poetry and religion..

There is a final aspect in which the East differs very much from the West in musical matters, namely, its sensitiveness to an aesthetic of hour, season, mood with the mode in which the song is sung. Also in India especially a belief exists in the co-operation of super-physical beings with the mode used (each special raga having its own presiding deity), whom the sounds evoke, and music is recognised and employed in order to bring about certain psychological ends, and certain psychical states through the help of these *Devas*. This is a region still unexplored by Western musicians except a few of the most modern.

So many miracles of sound have happened in these last few years, such as the powers of the phonograph, the gramophone, the telephone, the radio, that it behoves sceptics about the evocative power of sound to keep quiet and perhaps the East will open another secret of the power of music, and the magic of Orpheus with his lute be re-enacted.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A HISTORIC MUSICAL EVENT<sup>1</sup>

Yea, the phantom Harper flings  
Joy from catastrophic strings;  
Turns to songful interlude  
Earth's and Man's vicissitude;  
Draweth from the dumb, as I  
From old Earth's disastrous dip  
Borrow my musicianship,  
Ringing out my golden tune  
On the stillness of the stone.

*The Brook—Cousins*

INTERNATIONALISM is a state of the mind of humanity that has to be developed in many different ways. The League of Nations has quite remarkably recognised this along the lines of political, labour, and social reform activity. It has also formed the International Committee of Intellectual Co-operation, but the title itself shows its limitations, for there is a region of human nature deeper and wider than the intellect, namely, the emotional, which expresses itself in the arts. We have not yet heard, for instance, of anything that the League has done for Painting, Sculpture, the Drama, etc., and yet without some comparative study and understanding of these and allied areas of national self-expression the springs of many lamentable effects in world history will remain unexplored and misunderstood.

Music is particularly the language of the emotions and as so much action of the world springs from

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1927.

emotion rather than from intellect music will be one of the subjects which will receive attention from the Committee of Artistic Co-operation which must be organised by the League of Nations in the near future to complete its sphere of international service to the world as one joint family system.

In India the honour belongs to an advanced Indian State—the State of Mysore—of having recognised that a Master Artist is a World Citizen, and of having honoured him as such through giving a wide publicity to his best work. On March 26, 1827, one of the very greatest musicians in world history died. His name, Beethoven, is for Western musicians what Thyagaraja is for South Indians or Tansen for North Indians. He was born in Bonn on the Rhine, but achieved fame and spent most of his life in Vienna, the metropolis of Austria.

At first sight, one wonders what possible connection this German creator of noble music can have with India. That the Mysore Ruler, his Band Conductor, and the music-loving public of Mysore and Bangalore saw the centenary date as an occasion on which they should do public honour to Beethoven, shows how far ahead in culture, in broad-mindedness, in musical appreciation, Mysore actually is, for it seems to be the only part of India which has, in this way, organised a regular Beethoven Festival lasting practically a week, and including a concert for school-pupils, an evening Grand Symphony concert, and a Chamber Concert.

In Bangalore art circles West and East meet on terms of equality and enjoy the specialities of each. His Highness the Maharaja became Patron of the Festival in conjunction with the Resident and the General

of the British Army commanding Madras Presidency. His Highness willingly lent his Palace Orchestra for the Festival and it was supplemented by players from the Bangalore branch of the British Music Society. There were forty Indian bandsmen, several Britishers, an Irish solo pianist, a German conductor, all sharing in the happiness of re-creating the great compositions of the master-musician Beethoven. Music became the medium for an Eastern League of Nations, a Committee on Artistic Co-operation of the kind one longs to see repeated constantly during the future. There were fifty players in the Orchestra and sixteen different kinds of instruments. A very valuable educational use was made of the Festival for school children. About 400 pupils were brought to the final rehearsal of the Symphony Concert and before the programme began a melody was played by each kind of instrument to demonstrate to the boys and girls its special quality of tone-colour. There was no doubt that these young people thoroughly enjoyed their share in the Festival, and playing for them gave a freshness and spirit of youth to the playing of the orchestra that afternoon that was not compensated for by the maturity of the late evening performance on Saturday to a filled theatre. Months before, when the suggestion was put before His Highness the Maharaja that such a festival should be held, he saw how increased its effect would be by some representation of Beethoven himself, the man, and he placed an order for the sculpturing of a bust of the composer. This had been cleverly executed by Mrs. Alderton of Mysore, almost double life size. The bust stood on a pedestal by the piano, draped with the Mysore State colours, and crowned by the conductor's daughter



with a wreath of laurels. That strong worn face, with the noble brow and the atmosphere of victory over deafness, ill-health, loneliness, poverty, and the ingratitude of his loved nephew, was an inspiration to the work of the festival. It was a dramatic touch and seemed almost a ghostly visitor, grown to super-human size by virtue of his greatness and his hundred years' sojourn in the higher world. What a noble action was the Maharaja's in thus honouring the Maharaja of Western musicians and introducing his human appearance to the thousand people who attended the three concerts of the festival.

'Wisdom is wisdom only to the wise,  
Thou art thyself the royal thou hast crowned,  
In beauty thine own beauty thou hast found,  
And thou hast looked on God with God's own eyes.

Beethoven would have been surprised to hear a band of Indians playing his great and difficult C minor symphony so worthily. For these men to have conquered the technique and spirit of a system of music utterly different from their native Carnatic music is a proof that music can indeed become a universal language, if only there is the fostering patronage of educational authorities big enough to include all kinds of musical culture in their musical training. His Highness also supports an entirely Carnatic Band, a Hindustani band, and a fife and drum band, and his Music Director, Mr. Otto Schmidt, has studied and appreciates also these systems of musical expression. Months of hard work had been given by the Palace Orchestra to the practice of the Egmont Overture, the Piano Concerto, the Romance and the 5th Symphony. The latter is one of

the noblest classics of musical literature and brilliantly conducted by memory as it was by Mr. Schmidt, its nobility, its varieties, its gamut of emotional expression, its beauty, genius and power, were given forth in conditions of race, climate, novelty, and achievements over difficulties that truly made it 'an historic event'.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SNATCHES OF SOUTH INDIAN MUSIC<sup>1</sup>

Lo! my radiant moments glow  
Only in my seaward flow  
To the sagest of my strains:  
‘Substance goes but song remains.’  
Weighted not by staff and purse  
Past accumulation’s curse,  
All our vagrant singing throng  
On our passing build our song;  
And our tuneful fancies fly  
Winged with cosmic sympathy.

‘The Brook’—from *A Forest Meditation*—Cousins

IN the picturesque, romantic and sacred surroundings of Tirupati Hill I wake in the palace of the old Rajas of Chandragiri and in the faint and pensive light of the earliest dawn my attention is challenged. What has roused me? Ah! there it is, a stream of melody coming across the valley green with paddy, a morning invocation to the God of Life, full of yearning aspiration. As it continues it strengthens in assurance and finally turns to praise. I look out to see the serenader of day and to my astonishment see in the dim distance that it is the ploughman who is moving his bullocks up and down the well-incline while greeting the sun and praising his bovine workers in one and the same breath. Sings the Indian poet-musician of the eighth century, ‘The hand that makes offerings to the gods is supported by the hands that hold the plough.’

The hands of the gods that control the world are supported by the hands that hold the plough.’

<sup>1</sup> Published in 1921.

Or there is the variant in the country town when one's first waking impression is the poignant piercing of the heavens and the dawn by the muezzin from his high platform chanting the 'Allah, Ho Akbar, Allah, Allah' which vibrates into the thin upper air like an emotional lance of music magic, creating a nostalgia of the heart to the half-awakened senses barely returned from the life of dreams. In such wise is music the awakener in all South India.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Have you not been struck by the haunting song that floats to you through the palms? It is short. It is re-iterated over and over again. Ah, but if you listen very carefully you will hear one note changed each time. That is the note all listen for. It is extempore. Then how will it be changed next time? And the time after next? Can the hearer anticipate it? Therein lies the interest in the method of Indian music which sounds monotonous to the careless and untrained listener. But the well-workers of Madras walk up and down the quaint trapeze steps by which the water vessel is lowered and raised to a rhythm of sound and creative activity that combines music and gymnastic and the beauty of nature with a labour which is at the root of life.

It is by song and chant that indigenous labour is regulated and stimulated in South India.

It is by the power of music that the roadmakers of India draw the heavy stone roller which hardens the surface. Why, labour set to music is labour lightened! The Indian folk-musicians were true psychologists. As

the chantey rises to its climax the muscles tighten, the brain is stimulated, the heart is uplifted, and lo, the great weight of stone has started, and before the end of the chant the section of road has been ground hard!

Similarly is the paddy sown in the fields to the evocation of field-songs as the rows of women move backwards and forwards in their lines when pressing the paddy-plant into the soppy soil. So many plants must go down for each musical phrase. *Counting by music* is a labour variant *on counting the music*! But what plant could refuse to grow happily when planted to music? If the music which regulates all the outdoor Indian labour redolent of the old civilisation could be transferred to the Western systems of industry perhaps there would be more harmony, less discontent and fewer strikes than exist under the modern method.

On the day when every parent in South India wants to buy his or her child a present have you noticed what the gift will be? A drum. It is not the blatant drum of other lands which marches one to bombast and battle and blood, but a little circle of pottery covered with a bit of skin. On this each village child pours out its delight in taps with the fingers and the hand, and its aim will be to produce the most far-fetched rhythms. It is imitating the God Shiva who is ever depicted with a similar *damru* drum by which only purified vibrations are set in motion in the life. The gift of a drum to a Baby Welcome Centre gave inexpressible joy and a circle of youngsters would happily sit round, each waiting its turn and criticising the defects of the drummer of the moment. Drumming is in the blood of the Indian, but

it is not the drumming of action, but the drumming of religious hypnosis.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is afternoon and a visitor calls. He introduces himself as one of the celebrated musicians of the Court of a Maharaja and has gold medals galore and letters of praise to justify his words. He is a singer. I expect to enjoy myself when to my horror he calls in his 'instrument', the Austrian portable harmonium for which Western musicians rightly have such a contempt. I ask him to sing without it. But he complains 'then I cannot show you how I can make my voice absolutely coincide with the harmonium'! The new god of ignorant but well-intentioned musicians in this benighted Presidency is the ear-splitting harmonium. It is almost as ubiquitous as the cottage piano in the West and accountable for as many horrors.

\* \* \* \* \*

Very different is the case at a home I visited in Tanjore, the city famous in the past for the culture of all the arts, famous in the present for its production of vinas and for its continued true Indian musicians. It was a revelation to me to hear the daughters of the late Rao Bahadur Pandithar sing the 22 demi-semi-tones of the scale of one octave as clearly as I have constantly heard the twelve semitones which make up the chromatic scale. I not only heard them but saw them as they showed me the positions of their fingers on the strings of the veena. And later they sang many striking melodies (ragas) which included the use of these quarter-tones so difficult of intonation and of hearing and so peculiarly a characteristic of Indian music.

It was sunset hour as we sat in the hundred-pillared mantapam of the temple on Trichinopoly Rock. About fifty Indians, all men, were sitting on the floor in the growing darkness. I was the only Westerner present and the only woman. It was a weird scene with the eye drawn to the glories of crimson and gold and purple gleaming through the many carved pillars and the ear ravished by the plaintive sweetness of the vina played by one of Mysore's finest musicians. I shall never forget the science, the skill, the inventiveness, the freedom, the emotion with which he extemporised the alapana of his chief raga. This is a form of prelude of which we have no equivalent in Western music. It is an exposition of the particular combination of sounds which are to be used in the chosen raga (and no others and no modulations are allowed). Not only is this group a scale combination of seven notes such as C D flat, E F sharp G, A B flat C (*Ramapriya*), but there may be formed convolutions amongst groups of them (melody moulds or motifs) which must occur each time those notes are used. This sound material must all be demonstrated to the hearer before the composition proper is started. The virtuoso will spend anything from 15 minutes to half an hour in impressing this composition substance on the hearers. No regularity of time is observed, no strictness of form, usually no words (for a singer). But the singer or player revels in free spontaneous improvisation intended to stabilise himself in the medium which he will have to use for the following hour or more perhaps. It is also a means of magnetising his hearers and his atmosphere, and becomes also a magical evocation of the god or goddess believed to be the informing spirit of the particular raga chosen.

That vina wizard in the dim religious light poured his whole soul into his exposition of his loved raga. First the lower notes were woven into one's memory, then there were jugglings with the characteristic twists in the melody mould, finally the highest notes were worked up to as climaxes, then all were again embellished with every form of adornment (*gamakas*). It seemed as if the musician was himself enthralled by the delight of his materials and could not let go his opportunity of displaying them in every possible circumstance of subjective feeling. The romantic mystery of the environment heightened the effect. He truly bore us with him on wings of song. We seemed to break the fetters of time and space. To me it seemed that we came to earth with a thud as he suddenly started on the set form of the raga proper (by Thyagaraja) and we had to bind ourselves again within a *talam* and the *Pallavi*, *Anupallavi* and *Charanam* with their attendant *Swaras*. But in this I may have showed myself a Philistine.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

There is proportionately very little combined singing in India, partly because there is no harmony in the Indian system, partly because the merit of the musician lies in his or her power of original embroidery around the theme. It is a special pleasure to hear bhajana parties enjoying hearty performances of a ballad-like form telling the story of the *Ramayana* with its refrain 'Ram-Sita, Sita-Ram' to interminable verses. It was a unique sight to see the poet Tagore teaching his national song to the hundreds of College students in Madanapalle, and to hear the stirring strains of 'Jana Gana Mana' rise to the enthusiasm of its chorus 'Jya



hay,' 'jya Hay,' as they sat round him in the moonlight piercing the bodhi tree in the warm summer night. Thousands of times have thousands of students sung it in South India since that night.

\*            \*            \*            \* \*            \*

While waiting in the rest-rooms of a Southern railway station for a train connection my ear was caught by some one singing a melody such as I had never heard before. It went on in a kind of *Mayamalavagowla* strain for some sections and then it included a progression such as C sharp, B flat, B double flat, A flat, then a half sharpened A and ended on C. It sent shivers through my musical spine first of amazement, then of appreciation at the skill of intonation, then of delight at the emotional result it managed to express. Never did the singer fail to record those strange intervals exactly aright. I peered down over the balustrade to see who was the artist below and found him a porter sitting amongst a grimy crowd of his fellows on the lower steps of the stairs. Of such stuff is the warp and woof of musical India made.

Who that has heard Abdul Kareem can forget his mastery of Carnatic music even though he is himself a Muhammadan from Poona side? His mastery over rhythm is phenomenal. He not only *sang* sounds (his voice is his poorest asset) but he *became* every turn and twist in the song. His hands, arms, face became part of the musical instrument, part of the expression. Nothing was too intricate for him. His audience 'Ah-ed' and 'Oh-ed' and shook its head and nodded in a kind of ecstasy to other heads when he had called

down his afflatus, and the atmosphere became surcharged with a musical magic I have contacted nowhere else. In various South Indian towns he was met at the stations and escorted to his quarters with garlands and a procession, like a king, but the materialism of our chief city failed to recognise him as the *rara avis* he is and he has flown from it.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Who are these reserved looking men filing into the Hall? They sit down in two rows on each side of the floor beside where the President sits on a deer-skin. After a few minutes they begin to chant. Fuller and fuller grows the volume of sound. For over a half-an-hour they chant the Vedas in the ancient classical style. Full of a strange charm it is to the trained musician with its sudden rises of tone at the end of phrases, with its limited range of sounds, and yet with their fresh beauty even after constant repetition. They are twenty of the students at the Sanskrit Pathasala at Madura, all holy Brahmins, and when they finish their chantings they are given food and plantains and withdraw without caring what is the ensuing meeting or function. They bring with them the atmosphere of the birth of the Aryan civilisation when the Rishis intoned the Sama Veda, the basis of the science of Indian music.

Through the day we have heard music here, there and everywhere. In one street a band announces a marriage, in another a nageswara plays in a temple, in a third some barber musicians advertise by music the seventh pre-natal month of the expected heir, here a bhagavathar sings and begs, there a conch wails out

the long tone associated with the carried bier. In South India one cannot get away from music. Even when one retires for the night the tom-toms of the temple or the village festival just awake,—or it may be that one is within hearing of the drums of the drama. If so then good-bye to sleep, for the Indian music-lover does not think the drama value unless its singing, singing, singing, goes on till three in the morning.

## CHAPTER XV

### VOICE AND INSTRUMENT

#### *A Comparative Study in Musical Expression*

His melody is sky-line to new hills;  
Her harmony a star-built firmament.

*A Musician's Home—Cousins*

As one surveys the Art of Music comparatively in the Oriental and Occidental civilisations it does not seem too sweeping a generalisation to say that the East is the kingdom of the Voice, and the West the kingdom of the Instrument. It may be profitable then to review the relative standing today of these contrasted media of musical expression.

Undoubtedly Music has its spring *within* humanity. The One Life, the Great Life, planned Music as one of its modes of objectivising its own Being in its aspect particularly of emotion. Music is one of the methods of expressing Life and its laws. Haweis in his *Music and Morals* says that 'the arts arise out of a certain instinct which impels man to make an appeal to the senses by expressing his thought and emotions in some external form.' All the equipment for expressing Being as experienced through emotion has been installed in the human home of consciousness from its very inception and in the perfection of possibilities far beyond the capacity of the individual as yet to enjoy to the full.

We think of sound as primarily necessary for speech. What the perfume is to the flower music is to speech.

Accordingly we find the *Maker of the Plan of Life* including all the paraphernalia for making music self-contained in the human body,—the pipe of the throat, the reed in the larynx, the sounding-board and sound-box of the palate and mouth, the bellows of the lungs, the tympanum of the ear. How 'fearfully and wonderfully are we made'! And so natural and so spontaneous is the urge and the power to sing that many a baby under one year old can already hum tunes and make its own little melodies. Certainly the power to sing comes in advance of the power or desire to play a musical instrument.

The capacity of the informing Life to express itself in music is definitely evolutionary. Amongst primitive people the number of sounds used in their songs goes rarely beyond five. It took hundreds of years for the ear of European people to develop the power of hearing and employing thirds and sixths, and the inclusion of the diminished seventh was accomplished only two hundred years ago in Europe. One of the results of the millenia of time stored in the race-consciousness of India, China and Persia is the ability to hear, employ, and enjoy intervals smaller than the minor second of the Western chromatic scale. The Oriental countries have, however, cramped their material for making music by binding their expression within the confines of the human singing voice, although they well know the power of the human ear to react to and enjoy musical sounds above and below those limits. In a way it is typical of the East that it has worked intensively within the bounds of the individual without external aids, and thus has its quarter tones and even smaller divisions of the tone as in Chinese music, while the West has

expansively taken in the wider sweep of seven and a half octaves through the help of the objective musical instrument.

The lilt of the child, the love song of the youth, the little dance-rhythmic melody of the gipsy woman, the hymn of praise to God of the devotee, the 'keen' for the dead, all have the characteristics of subjectivity, spontaneity and simplicity.

Whatever instruments have come into fashion as the millenia move along the singing voice remains ever the same. It is the ancient, the eternal, the divinely designed instrument of emotion in sweet, free sound. It has been the Alpha and will remain the Omega of musical instruments.

While Nature has endowed humanity with such scientific apparatus for making music, she has also made it part of her Plan that the individual should have to do some co-operation with her in exploring and gaining control of the equipment which she has so freely provided. Thus training of the voice and ear are found to be as necessary for producing pure sound and perfect singing as training of the muscles is for securing physical strength.

There are many differences between East and West in the methods and aims of voice production. Perhaps the most fundamental is that the primary object of the teacher of singing in the Orient is to make the pupil 'pitch perfect' as early as possible. Exercises are given in order to secure the 'placing' of the sounds within the capacity of the individual to produce so firmly in the ear and mind and mechanism of the voice that the singer is as certain of the sounds required as if the very notes were fixed in an objective artificial

instrument, and not the momentary creation of consciousness, will, and the unseen human apparatus. Each sound is studied as a very real thing in itself, with all kinds of characteristics in itself. Similarly with intervals, the relation of sounds following sounds, for those relationships which Westerners know as 'intervals', in which two notes are sounded together, do not come into the consciousness of people who base their music on the powers of the single voice. It is a remarkable limitation of the human voice as contrasted with an instrument that the voice can produce only one sound at a time therefore the very nature of vocal music is free flowing melody. Those of us who have become aware of the richness of line of the melodic Orient alone can realise how cramped has vocal expression become in the West since the voice has become merely a factor in a harmonic system which also surrounds it with, and often drowns it with, instrumental background and foreground.

It has often been said that music can change environment, but it is equally true that environment changes music. It has been the change of circumstances which an industrial and scientific age has brought in its train that has created the second stage of musical expression, if we view the purely melodic, monodic, system of the Orient as the first stage in the evolution of music today. In doing so certain instruments in the East are included but they are essentially even to the present day 'followers' of the voice, and chiefly used as preservers of the pitch, and often only as a drone background.

In Europe from the seventeenth century onwards large cities sprang up. People congregated more for

religious purposes in institutions and churches than in their earlier history. In this way devotional songs, chants and masses began to be sung by numbers of people together. At about the same time the violin and the organ were invented. Large quantities of sound were necessary to fill the immense cathedrals that had been built, and instruments were invaluable for this necessity. Thus began the struggle for existence of the free vocal art which till then had been the medium of music. The fight between voice and instrument, and between instrument and instrument still continues. We may say that instruments are at present in the ascendant. The Piano, the Organ, the String Quartett, the Orchestra, march from triumph to triumph ousting the voice, or merely allowing it a gradually decreasing share in the importance of the opera or oratorio.

When the venerated Beethoven was giving immortality to feeling in his Sonata 'Farwell, Absence and Return' he felt no necessity to use the human voice. Perhaps it was because the range of his feelings had outgrown the human gamut of sound. He found the Pianoforte the ideal for his emotional expression. Yet even he at his climax, the Ninth Symphony, which expresses the ecstasy of Joy, added a chorus of singers to the final movement of that colossal creation for the full orchestra. His sense of cosmic truth demanded the inclusion of God's primary reed in the human throat. Composers are still experimenting in the West with the function of singing in the extended range of effects in music that have resulted through the development of musical instruments and their increasing domination of the art. For instance Gustav Holst created very beautiful effects by using a choir of women's high voices in



his Tone Poem representing 'Neptune', one of his series 'The Planets'. This special chorus is sung without words and its result is something like the distillation of sound. Though this composer knows the full value of instrumental music yet he chose unaccompanied voices only to create his exquisite 'Hymns of Jesus', and one feels it was not only because he knew an orchestral accompaniment would be a historical anachronism, but also a psychological mistake.

In the second stage of musical evolution the voice still held supremacy. More instruments were added to the accompaniment, but it was only an accompaniment, such as we find in the great oratorios or the great Masses. This stage has been passed in the West but there are many signs that the Orient is entering it. Certainly India is in a transition stage as regards the use of instruments and their inherent scientific and aesthetical possibilities.

Europe is seen to have run sociologically and politically through the circle of autocracy, of Emperor, Dictator, or Pope, of feudalism, of limited monarchy, of democracy, right back to oligarchy and dictatorship again. Music has mirrored this evolution of the social consciousness. Plato has said that it is a change of music that is followed by a change in politics and Cyril Scott has written an original book reviewing and studying history from this standpoint but undoubtedly the expansion to the democratic ideal of affairs brought about the change to the 'Mass production' of music with which music entered its third stage, that in which instruments completely emancipated themselves from the control of, or even co-operation with, the voice. Instruments now function in a kingdom of their own. It is self-contained,

independent, completely objective, harmonic, spontaneous only in the mind of the composer, otherwise reproductive rather than creative, inter-dependent rather than independent in its power of expression, with colour, texture, atmosphere and message all of its own for abstract emotion and thought unconnected with words or programme. It mirrors Nature and Humanity in a way entirely beyond the power of the voice alone. The Orchestra can drown us in an ocean of sound, it can raise a veritable storm, it can intoxicate and hypnotise, it can tease us out of thought as it fills our being, it can raise us to heights of sublimity, it can give us infinite variety. It is an evolution of the powers of music of which humanity may indeed be proud. Yet there should be kept a corner in the heart for human humility, for with all its tremendous powers the instrument, whether singly or in hundreds, can never convey the intimate communing of the self with the Self, the individual soul with the Oversoul, that is realisable by the oriental spiritual singer. One has only to think of some illustrative figures to see how music has expanded in volume and variety in the West in these last two centuries. John Sebastian Bach employed only 16 voices and 20 instruments: Wagner 110, Berlioz 800, Scriabine intended his 'Mystery' to have 1,000 performers, and Foulds after the War used 2,000 performers (singers and orchestras) to produce his 'Requiem' in London.

The growth of musical instruments in number and variety, and the growth in numbers of massed singers has kept pace with the growth of social consciousness. The world has invaded the ordinary human being, and through scientific inventions—gramophone, radio,

television, telephone, space-destroying speeds of aircraft and motor powers—the extended environment and its reactions demand increased media in music as well as in other things for its increased emotional tension. But many things show that the resultant consciousness is of a quality that may be defined as horizontal rather than vertical, knowledge of objects rather than understanding of life; a dualism of selfishness rather than an identity with Humanity and Nature which would bring true harmony of Being. It may take a long time for this third stage in musical evolution to reach a point when variety will become satiety, and the human individual soul will ache for the simplicity of a new form of the pastoral life, which will reflect itself in the pure-throated singer vying with the birds to greet the sun.

When spiritual values re-assert themselves in the world, when the individual grapples fundamentally with his or her own problems as the root of the solution of the problems of the world, a new period in music will arise in which the individual will re-orient the present musical values and then the ecstasy of singing one's way to the heart of Song, and of realising the harmony within one's own nature, and the harmony of all things in Nature, will give back again to God's primal instrument its sovereignty. It is then that the Orient will give to wide humanity the gifts of its knowledge of what Music can mean to the Soul, something quite different from the westerner's ideas of music. Where before song was primitive and limited in gamut, and in psychological content, it will in this coming fourth era of the turn of the wheel of musical progress, bring into patency all that was latent. When the command 'Man, know thyself!' has been obeyed, the singer will be able to play on his

own occult centres, well known to Hindus, he will be able to 'tune them in' with the sound centres that inhere in Nature and in all things. He will be more anxious to make his music synchronise with the music of the Infinite than to seek to make it acceptable to a human audience. The art of the solo singer, who is saint as well as songster, will foster a concentrated, noumenal art rather than a diverse and phenomenal art. The essence of sound will then be sought. The result will be a fullness of utter simplicity, akin to the distillation of the perfume of the rose, which yet contains all the life and life processes of that perfect product of the One Life. Probably words will not then be needed, for words tend to fetter rather than free the melody of the Soul. Even now the Oriental musician finds more aesthetic satisfaction in dwelling upon the inherent beauties and powers of a single melodic sequence drawing these forth by a process of repetition with infinitely small and complex microtonal and rhythmic variations than in listening to the sound avalanches of an orchestra. Music will be different when each musician will be a creator rather than an interpreter, when the craze for possessing a radio set by which to hear the music produced by others will have been transmuted into the ideal and the achievement of possessing individually a perfect ear, a perfect voice, perfect technique to control the secrets of the science of sound and a resultant power to make the whole nature articulate, to provide a channel for the spontaneous overflow of one's deeper nature and spiritual magnificence, or bring about perfect accord between the nature within the individual and Nature without. It is Asia which has preserved the alphabet of the magical mantras which will create a new heaven

and a new earth through a new understanding of the art of sound as an 'open Sesame' to regions of higher spiritual consciousness. After the overwhelming majesty of massed orchestra and choruses there will be a swing of the heart of humanity to a desire for the 'Still, Small Voice', even for the 'Silence implying sound', or for that 'Voice of the Silence' in which

'Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye sweet pipes, play on,  
Not to the sensual ear, but more endeared,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.'

## CHAPTER XVI

### INDIAN MUSIC IN MADRAS<sup>1</sup>

Bring your music forth into the air.  
How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!  
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music  
Creep in our ears; soft stillness, and the night,  
Become the touches, of sweet harmony.

*The Merchant of Venice*—Shakespeare

By chance I discovered a satisfactory Indian equivalent to a Western series of Chamber Music Recitals, or Celebrity Concerts. I had occasionally attended some concert of an Indian musician at the Victoria Hall or at Gokhale Hall, Madras, and had left it dissatisfied, for the character of the voice, the instruments and the religious subject-matter of the songs seemed out of keeping entirely with the environment of the unresponsive, over-large hall. The musicians were not at ease; the *milieu* was not Indian. I knew this could not be the music of which my Indian friends spoke enthusiastically. I found an improvement when I met the musicians in the private houses of Indian friends of cultured tastes. I well remember my entire surprise the first time I was asked to attend an evening party at the home of a famous Madras Barrister. I expected jollity and chatting and perhaps a little music, instead the entertainment had begun before I arrived and consisted of one singer giving a rendering in music of some religious story, and all the legal luminaries kept silent all the

<sup>1</sup> Published in 1926.

evening, profoundly engrossed in a religious theme. I could not fancy a duplicate of the experience amongst a group of similar people in Dublin from which I had only recently come! At marriages and temples we all know of the performance of Indian music, but the music is secondary, so it also did not satisfy my quest. I felt a decided step forward was taken in the music of the city when the Corporation subsidised the performances of Indian music in the Madras Parks. But one no more expects to hear the high class performance of Indian art there than one expects a Beethoven Symphony performed by the Western band on the Marina. Yet it is good that the man in the street should be given the chance to hear in the open air the music he enjoys, when he is in a period of relaxation. Madras has given a very good lead to other cities in this particular.

It was at a private party given by Srimati Sarojini Naidu during her visit to Madras some years ago that I first heard Abdul Karim and immediately recognised that I was in the presence of a first rank musician, a creative artist, and a supreme master of the science of Indian music both Northern and Southern.

Yet still I felt that a musician's highest powers are drawn forth by a larger audience more than by the limited circle of a drawing-room. He needs either the solitude of a shrine if he be a musician of spiritual devotion (a bhakta) with not more than three or four unobtrusive pupils to absorb the teaching he gives unconsciously by this subjective method—or he needs the magnetic action and reaction of a large number of people filling a hall proportioned to his power of sound.

My intuition was right. This month the Indian Music Sabhas have found me, and I am satisfied that

there are programmes, organisation, audiences and musical enjoyments of Indian music of the highest quality existent in Madras City, which bear to the Indian music the same character as the Halle Band does to Manchester. Yet one must not think in terms of an orchestra, or a Caruso, or a Covent Garden. Indian music is not production on the big scale. Its aims are entirely different. Firstly and lastly it is religious, secondarily it is intellectual or scientific, and thirdly it is limited to a range of normally three octaves only, no harmony, and few concerted performers. But it has an immense sweep of effect through the varied scale materials of which it is composed. Since I have learnt to hear, with understanding and clear grasp of its intonation, its rich and varied modes I can never again be satisfied with the major and minor modes only of Western classical music.

It was a clear, well-spaced advertisement on a bill-posting hoarding that invited my attention to the fact that a series of musical performances was being held weekly in a Mylapore Sangam, and that on the next Sunday afternoon a celebrated flautist, a violinist and a drummer would be the artists. The grip and definition of that poster gave me assurance, and I determined to explore the concert. On inquiry I found that the Sangam was well and favourably known, and to my astonishment I was advised to get there early. When I entered the concert hall I knew I had found the ideal setting and organisation of Indian music as performed for the public.

The hall is a large cadjan roofing attached to the wide verandah of a house shut right away from the road by one of the street houses. This ensures complete silence, unlike the conditions of the city halls. The sides of the



hall are composed of the fruit and flowering trees of the garden. Clean matting formed the seating accommodation for about 200 people and around it were two rows of benches and chairs. The verandah formed the platform on which the performers sat on a dais covered with a handsome cloth. A section of the hall near the musicians was reserved for ladies without the stupidity of any intervening and blinding purdah curtain such as I had endured elsewhere. It was a delightful audience of real lovers of music from the First Servant of India through all stages of society to the servant woman. There was no smoking, no shuffling, no going in and out. A clear, well-printed notice announced 'Silence is requested,' and quietness prevailed. Efficiency marked the programme for the series and for the day; good taste held away all jarring pictures or photographs or tawdry paper buntings from the place; dignity and devotion pervaded the environment of the performance.

The flautist was the 'star' performer, but to my mind the violinist was the greater artist and certainly the more magnetic personality. The drummer accentuated the points and worked up a stimulating atmosphere when he got his chances.

I had the impression that it was a green and white performance, with splashes of vivid colour from a cerise scarf or a brilliant sari or the glint of diamonds from some quickly turned ear. The green of the trees was reflected and brought into our hands in palmyra green-tinted fans freely distributed, and it was reflected to our eyes in the grass-green satin cover of the drum. The music might be translated into the same colours by a musical impressionist painter of the modern school. Altogether a purifying, wholesome concert, worthy of

an ancient and highly developed art, or, as music is religion with the Hindus, as a devotional rite whose priests represented their musical Gods, Brahma the strings, Vishnu-Krishna, the flautist, and Siva the drummer.

Altogether different, though with the possibility of being the same, was the performance of Abdul Karim in an Egmore Sabha. I never miss hearing him at least once during his visits to Madras. He has no voice worth speaking of, but he is a musical wizard. He is accompanied by two tamburas and a drum but they form only a background. He sits cross-legged and moves only from his waist. His face is like a dark mask through which streams the most amazing wealth of varied melody. His power over intonation is the most complete I can imagine possible. His voice melts through the most difficult of intervals, clearly enunciates micro-tones, has every shade of expression. His personal art conquered, for me, all the distraction of surrounding inappropriateness and ugliness. One feels that there are always reserves of musical knowledge which only the deepest scholar in Indian music could draw adequately from him. His wonderful gestures of arm, hand and head, illustrate in living line the flow and flexibility of his wealth of variation of sound. It was a unique experience to find that half an hour of his working upon you in one very weird combination of notes (Jivanpuri), had so magnetised the surroundings to that set of vibrations that when he started to sing in another raga one felt entirely out of affinity with it. I understood then the science of alapana which bit by bit effects the demagnetisation of one set of vibrations, and creates gradually and freely a new musical sounding-board.

There is a wealth of music in Madras these days, but there is no dominating musical leader such as the Principal of the Gandharva Vidyalaya in Bombay or Duleep Kumar Roy in Calcutta. Will the Telugu or Tamil University produce one such?

## CHAPTER XVII

### RUSSIAN MUSIC<sup>1</sup>

#### *A Link between East and West*

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,  
But in his motion like an angel sings;  
Still quiring to the, young-eyed cherubims:  
Such harmony is in immortal souls,  
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in we cannot hear it.

*The Merchant of Venice*—Shakespeare

RUSSIA is the vast and mysterious land which stands, Janus-like, in actuality, in civilization, and in consciousness, between Europe and Asia; and in itself links up and manifests the outstanding characteristics of both continents in its polity, its temperament and its arts. It is especially incumbent on Internationalists to study and keep abreast of the times in all pioneer movements, amongst which is that National School of Russian Music which has roused the attention and astonishment of all musical Europe, since it was able, in about twenty-five years, to develop, assimilate, supersede and transcend all the previous schools, and attain a great measure of success in its new gift to the world, an Art-Form, the Russian Ballet-Opera, which acts as a Unifying Form for all the arts, combining as it does colour, form, poetry, dancing, music, and psychology—that final Art of Life.

Until the year 1836 the only music Russians ever heard, except their folk-songs, was imported to them, with its musicians, from Italy, France or Germany.

<sup>1</sup> This article was written in 1917.

True, it was good in quality, for it was procured by Tsars, Empresses and Grand Dukes, and the autocratic civilisation of the East does things in the grand manner rarely attained by a democracy. We find the first organized body of musicians was a small concert orchestra of Germans, brought to St. Petersburg and supported by Peter the Great and one of his Grand Duke sons-in-law. After this, Italian opera and Italian musicians entirely held the stage, although the patriotic initiative and genius of a woman, the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, made the attempt to produce some distinctive Russian music. On her ascent to the throne she got together a company of Russians which, though very inferior, produced a Russian Opera in 1755. This may be regarded as the sowing of the seed of the great Russian School of Music of a century later, and it followed the law of seed-growth in that it fell into the ground and seemingly died, for the patriotic impulse withered, and though a very brilliant period of music followed under the reign of the great Empress Catherine, it was exclusively the product of musicians of foreign countries. This cultured Empress invited the best composers and singers of other countries to her Court; she surrounded herself with musical artists, encouraging them in every possible way and loading them with honours. Thus we find enshrined in Russian musical history the names of such Italians as Martini, Paisiello, Sarti, Cimarosa, the Austrian Cuvos, the Irish John Field, inventor of the Nocturne, the French Boieldieu, and many virtuosos of the first rank. In the reigns of these two Empresses the cult of music became almost a frenzy, and the legend runs that the Empress Elizabeth mercilessly imposed a fine of fifty roubles on

any of her guests who were unable to take part in a Court entertainment. Would that such enthusiasm in high places still held sway! With the accession of the Tsar Alexander I, Italian music was superseded by the French School, but there was no diminution in musical zeal. Thus the personal musical fervour of these three sovereigns gave an impetus to the musical taste and training of the whole of the Russian aristocracy for a century and a half, and established the invaluable musical fashion of private retained orchestras, family quartet parties, amateur concerts at the houses of young noblemen, who were also amateur composers with the facilities for producing their own works. In fact, Chamber music was the order of the day, and Russian young men were then as keen on playing a musical instrument as Englishmen are today on playing football or cricket. Thus amongst the aristocrats there was high musical culture, a wide knowledge of the music of other countries, and a mastery of technique, both in composition and practice.

On the other hand, the serfs were equally musical, but in another way. The Russians as a people are deeply religious and highly mystical, and this is the temperament which naturally expresses itself in music, the language of the emotions. The primary, natural mode of emotional expression is song; one hears it in the humming to themselves of little children in their innocent happiness; it is the source of the whistling of workmen and the singing of women at their work. The history of music all over the world proves that the joy and peace of high spiritual realisation ever seeks to express itself in music. 'I will sing unto the Lord,' said the Psalmist, and it is in accordance with this psychological law that actually the origins of modern Western music are

to be traced in all countries to the monks in monasteries; similarly in Russia it was the celebrated St. John of Damascus who in the eighth century systematised and restored the services and vocal music of the Greek Church, and himself composed the hymns, psälms and ritual music still in use. This school of Church music was entirely vocal, as no instrument is allowed in the Greek Church, and it trained the peasants in the art and love of singing, and this they carried into their daily life and through it produced the richest store of folk-songs to be found in any nation. They had *singing games* for feast days to the accompaniment of different games and dances; *songs for special occasions*, of which the wedding song is the most popular type; *street songs* of a jovial or burlesque character; *songs of the burlaks*, or barge-bawlers; and *songs for a single voice* of every sort and kind. Cui, the celebrated writer of the young Russian school says: 'It is impossible to estimate the value of these folk-songs when you consider their variety, the expressiveness of the feelings they contain and the richness and originality of their themes.' These Russian folk-songs have peculiar rhythms, 5 and 7 time being common to them; their compass is very restricted, rarely moving beyond the interval of a fifth or sixth; the theme is seldom longer than two bars, repeated with changing developments as often as is needed; their harmonization is traditional, and extremely original, using progressions in contrary motion with great effect; their form and tonality are those of ancient Greek music, the great majority being written in the Dorian mode (the scale of E minor without F sharp or D sharp), the Æolian mode (A minor without the leading note), or the Hypophrygian (the key of G without F sharp). A Rus-

sian musical writer, Alexander Famintsin, has written a treatise on *The Ancient Scale of Indo-Chinese Music and its Appearance in Russian Folk-Song*, and this influence from the Tartar side produces the distinctive semi-Oriental flavour which underlies all Russian music. This was the indigenous musical expression of the numberless millions of Russia's peasants, and it was cultivated as strenuously by them as was the Italian and French music by the Court and its aristocrats.

In the person of Michael Ivanovitch Glinka these two types of musical culture found a meeting place and of their union was born the recognised and famous national school of Russian music. He had been steeped in the Italian music of the Court and was pursuing its further study in Italy, when during his tour there he wrote 'home-sickness led me little by little to write Russian music'. The great idea 'haunted his mind' of creating a Russian musical style. 'I want my beloved countrymen to feel thoroughly at home when they hear it,' he said of his ideas of writing a Russian opera. For this end he chose a national epic theme, a story of heroic self-sacrifice, and realising, no doubt through the help of the national Deva, that this inspiration of a national character is to be found in the instinctive creative genius of the masses of that nation, he went straight to the folk-songs of Russia for his models, and combining the characteristics of these with his wide cosmopolitan knowledge and mastery of technique, he gave to Russia in 1836 his famous opera *A Life for the Tsar*, which sounded forth the rhythm since then followed by the Russian School of Music. It was immediately acclaimed by the people and became a really national event. As is recounted in Arthur Pougin's *Short*



*History of Russian Music*, the opera was played with such continuous success that on its 50th birthday its 577th performance was a kind of solemn national festival, and it had its counterpart in the provinces, where *A Life for the Tsar* was given in every Russian town which possessed an Opera house. His other great opera, *Rousslan and Ludmilla*, was a work of genius of still higher rank, and in it especially are found fresh, piquant harmonies which borrow a strange colouring from certain Oriental scales. It is a commentary on the gulf that till quite recently separated Russia from Western Europe that these operas, so popular in their own country, were not performed in Paris until 1896. Glinka was followed by the composer Dargomisky, whose choice of operatic subjects illuminates the other-worldliness of the Russians, *the Triumph of Bacchus*, *the Roussalka (the Water Sprite)*, *the Stone Guest*. He was the first to use the 'melodic recitative' which became one of the pillars of the new musical school, and which replaces the set arias and concerted numbers of the older style of opera.

To the Western world Russian musical genius became known through the magnificent piano playing and the compositions of Anton Rubinstein, and through the orchestral writings of Tchaikovsky, both of whom though not ranked in their own country as typically Russian writers, yet mightily enriched the musical life of Europe. Their karma and their gifts enabled them to bring their country's culture to the front and prepared the way for the young Russian school. Indeed Rubinstein might be called the Napoleon of music marching like a victorious General from Moscow to Paris and across the world. Since their time Russia

has no longer been thought a semi-barbaric, semi-civilized country. But the music of these two men was not as nationalistic as Glinka's or the works of the young Russians who followed them. They represent the high-water mark of a transition period, and while they added new elegance, grace and fire to musical capital, they did not so utilise the national sources of inspiration and expression, thus striking out an original path, as did Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Cui and Moussorgsky, who were their contemporaries. Dealing with the work of these men, Rubinstein made the following important statement: 'The originality of Russian music, as shown in its melodies and rhythms, should bring about a kind of fertilisation of music in general—a fertilisation which will also be affected, I believe, by Oriental music.'

It was just about the same time that Professor Max Muller and Madame Blavatsky were introducing Eastern philosophy to the West that Russia was roused into attention by the revolutionary musical ideas of a coterie of brilliant men, nicknamed the 'Group of Five', who self-consciously formulated, demonstrated, and successfully created the new Russian School of Music which has already given a fresh impetus to music-lovers all over Europe, and which broke quite new ground, thus contradicting the idea that Wagner had said the last word in music.

Had one the necessary clairvoyant ability, a study of the past lives of these five musicians would prove without doubt most fascinating and illuminating, for even to the superficial glance it is evident that they incarnated together in Russia for this special purpose, linked together by strong karmic ties, all passionate

patriots, serving their country along the Ray of Art, true followers of Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Saraswati. These five strong individualities were Caesar Cui, the speaker, the Aaron of the group; Balakirev, the Moses, who led them out of bondage to the older traditions; Borodin, Moussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, captains during the wilderness period. The last-named might be thought of as the Joshua who led his forces into the Promised Land. They must have been strong partisans of Gluck in their previous life, and indeed were his spiritual heirs. They boldly denied that any good operas had been written between the death of Gluck and their own time, and they used him and Glinka as their models—with additions. It is easy to see that, starting on the basis of their love of singing-games, which are really opera *in parvo*, Russians are natural lovers and supporters of Grand Opera, and the aim of these five reformers was to purify and re-construct the whole operatic conventional style of their time. Together they discussed the musical literature of the various countries, together they wrought out their new principles and methods of national opera; together they wrote and produced their famous operas, and as a result we have a galaxy of brilliant, original masterpieces which, when produced in London for the first time a year ago, astonished and ravished the hearers as they had done their countrymen for years past. Such operas are *Prince Igor*, *Boris Goudonov*, *Mlada*, *The Golden Cock*, *The Snow-Maiden*, *Ivan the Terrible*, *Sadko*.

These are all reactions from the Italian opera of the Rossini type, which Cui castigates as 'opera reduced to the condition of mere concert music embellished with

scenery and costumes, sacrificing truth of expression to brilliant vocal display distributed indiscriminately between all the characters'. Instead of this the 'young Russians' insisted that the opera must be a unity in form, rather than a diversity, as in former times, of concrete and cut-and-dried numbers such as arias, duets, etc. To this end, as Pouglin relates, 'they absolutely forbade any repetition of the words, they adopted a system of melodic recitative, the independence of the voice never to be sacrificed to the orchestra; they allowed no numbers written in a definite and predetermined form . . . they insisted that operatic music ought always to have an intrinsic value, as absolute music, apart from the text; above everything they insisted on the necessity of having fine Russian verse to set.' They started out on the 'Art for Art's sake' ideal, and let the public like it or leave it, but in the end, the strong practicability of their idealism led them to minor modifications. It is a remarkable evidence of the Russian character that the subjects chosen for treatment are rarely love-stories, but rather, great historic dramas, presentations in music of human psychology, the struggles of the soul of a nation, or representations of the Mysteries, or of the supernatural world. They have no Opera-Comique of the French, or musical comedy of the English type. Everything is on a large scale and thought out with the broad, free vision of a young and virile race bearing gifts for the future. The School is ever conscious of its responsibility in being the mouth-piece of the vast millions of people, the vast steppes, the vast problems to be solved, the vast possibilities of achievement, all linked in the intimate communal village life. In this country of autocratic government

there is a more widespread philosophy of individualistic spiritual anarchy than in any other, which produces extremes of saints and sinners, creative rather than interpretative artists, and determination to follow an idea to its logical conclusion, cost what it may. The musical power of such people having been once aroused, these qualities will make for exploration in expression, for novel effects in orchestration, already obtained by incorporating purely Eastern rhythms and percussion instruments in the scores. As the country is trying to create a free Constitution, so is its music everywhere seeking freedom from the old forms. Its present defects are haziness; sectional over-development; a continuous attempt to get more out of music than it can give; deliberate confusion at times of the art of music with the art of painting; a search oftentimes for the picturesque rather than for beauty of form. The very vividness of their temperament tends to exaggeration, and of one of the later writers, Rebikov, it is said: 'He wishes to free music from the trammels of definite form and tonality in order that it may be the faithful echo of all the impressions of the soul and the senses.'

M. Arthur Pougin's account of the magnificent system of musical education in Russia is among his most valuable contributions to our knowledge. With that system's Moscow Conservatoire, in which there is the unique feature of a whole system of general education running side by side with the purely musical education, making it in fact the first actual Musical University; its Imperial Chapel, unique for its production of famous singers; its Imperial Society of Music, a private and voluntary organisation, free of all State control, which undertake the charge of musical interests throughout the

whole country; its State-supported Opera houses, and an unfettered power of private initiative in all matters musical—there is every promise and congenial condition for the continuance of the ideals of the Great Group of Five, though all its members are now passed on. Indeed the following extract concerning one of their followers, Scriabin, shows that such has already occurred: 'In the orchestral poems, in *Prometheus*, and in his other later works which have provoked much discussion, Scriabin evolved a new idiom based on a harmonic system of his own to express the mystical programme underlying his music. A colour scheme, controlled by a key-board, is intended to synchronise with the music in *Prometheus*, and in his last work it is said that perfumes, too, are to play a part.' This great artistic attempt to make a unified Art-Form based on the Doctrine of Correspondences, and using a mode which is Eastern in character, though its originator has tragically met an early death, is certain to be followed up by his pupils of the Moscow Conservatoire, all eager to try new paths, and doubtless reinforced by the influence of their master from the inner world.

With the internal loosening of political shackles in that great country, great souls will undoubtedly rise to voice in music the freedom and the new spirit in Russia, as strikingly as did the 'Young Russians' in its days of yearning and oppression. By its close contact with the East it has in its power a whole new field of initiative and adaptation, which there is no doubt it will work to full fruition, thus indeed in itself fulfilling Rubinstein's prophecy, and fertilising and enriching the art of music throughout the world. The music of the East needs the orchestration, harmonisation and

concerted action of the West; the music of the West needs the spiritual understanding possessed by the East of the occult power of music as the liberator of the soul and the vehicle of the Devas; it is to Russia all look for the union of both, and the continued revelation and manifestation of the combined inspiration of Orpheus and Saraswati.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE KING OF VEENA PLAYERS<sup>1</sup>

Yea, and for song the heart has mutely willed  
Thou hast a place, with those majestic souls  
Who lay their utmost tribute at thy feet—  
Silence magnificent with song fulfilled.

*Hymn to the Song Goddess—Cousins*

It is an event in one's life to meet a king. I have met a king of a musical kingdom and the event has so impressed me that I must give expression to the admiration I feel for that venerable artist, Vidwan Seshanna, the chief musician of the Court of Mysore on whom His Highness the Maharajah of Mysore bestowed the title fourteen years ago of 'Vainikasikhamani', which literally translated means 'King of Veena Players'. That occasion was one of great honour and rejoicing and a public procession with elephants celebrated publicly the rejoicings of the Mysore people at the dignity worthily conferred by the most worthy hands of the beloved Priest-King of the State on one who so unanimously was acclaimed ruler of his own kingdom, the artistic.

Ever since I came to Madras nine years ago I had heard of the fame of Vidwan Veena Seshanna, the greatest of Indian musicians in an Indian State in which Indian music still received generous patronage and appreciation, unlike the treatment meted out to Indian music in British India and by many Indian princes. But it had not been my lot to hear him till two months

<sup>1</sup> Published in 1924. Vidwan. Seshanna passed away in 1928.



ago. I had known that he was giving performances on different occasions in the Gokhale Hall in Madras, but I shrank from a setting for his genius which I instinctively felt was unsuitable to the intimate nature of the veena, an instrument never intended for a large concert-hall. The veena was not invented to impress hearers but to express the soul of the player. It is the antithesis of the trumpet. My aesthetical instinct was rewarded, for it became my great privilege on each of my two recent visits to Mysore City to listen to Mr. Seshanna intimately with just a few equally musical listeners and in rooms suited to the quality of the performance. The distillation of musical tone which an artist in the veena produces is as much out of proportion in the great Jaganmohan Palace Hall as my performance of the Schumann Concerto for piano and full orchestra would have been in Mr. Seshanna's rooms.

It was through the friendly offices of the chief artist in colour in Mysore, the fine painter Mr. K. Venkappa, that the Vidwan kindly offered to play for me if I could call at his house on the last morning of the Dasara Durbar festival in Mysore City. I was specially pleased to hear him in his own musically magnetised environment for I knew I should hear him at his best there. Also it would be a new experience to hear the *ragas*, the modes, specially expressive of the moods of the morning, for the time appointed was 9 a.m. The Indian psychologists of music knew that different kinds of music are more in affinity with certain divisions of the day, and I knew that my host was very particular in this matter,—one of the explanations of the great influence he wields through his art.

As I drove up to his house there was the venerable,

slight but straight, old figure standing on his balcony waiting to welcome me. In his own kingdom he was holding his European Durbar and I realised the honour of being his invited guest. Mr. Seshanna is a dignified old gentleman of seventy-one years of age, but splendidly preserved save for his eyesight. He wears glasses but is practically blind. It is the flame of his spirit that upholds his refined body. He impresses one at once as a man of noble character, no sentimentalist—that firm beak-like nose shows the man of action and will, strangely in contrast with the sensitive line of the mouth and the slender, tense hands. Plenty of snow-white hair and a large white moustache accentuate the spotless white of his dress and give one the impression as he plays of a picture of a vital flame in a spacious white mount.

His son brought me upstairs to the Vidwan's room, an oblong hall from whose ceiling hung many glass chandeliers, and round whose walls were numbers of Indian mythological pictures in the old style of painting, neither the Ravi Varma nor the modern Bengal style. I was immediately struck with a large picture of Saraswati in this style beautifully composed and painted. 'Ah,' cried my friend, 'the Vidwan is her devotee and he always sits to play beneath that picture.' The Oriental effect of the room was increased by the row of dark carved pillars down the middle of the room with the carved lotuses on them picked out in pale shades of pink, an effect I had not before seen on these roof supports.

There we sat in a group round him on the mats on the floor,—the painter, a Member of the Mysore Legislative Council who is an enthusiastic lover of music and

a fine singer, Seshanna's son and adopted grandson, and four or five of his pupils—and for an hour and a half I listened to one of the most soul-satisfying recitals of music which I have yet heard. I cannot say *most*, for have I not also come under the spell of the perfection of the king of pianists, Paderewski, the power of Carreno, the pathos of de Pachmann, the illumination of Elman, the intoxication of the seldom heard singing of Rabindranath Tagore, the ravishment of John MacCormack's art of song, the exhilaration of the Valkyries. Music has many provinces, they are not for comparison though one may have a preference, but for each there is a master, and in each there is a perfection rarely achieved. In the science and art of South Indian music as expressed by the most perfect of Indian instruments, the veena, that perfection is to be heard in the chief Palace Musician of Mysore.

The Vidwan explained how the day was divided into periods of three hours each presided over by particular gods and goddesses to whom certain combinations of sounds called their respective ragas will give most pleasure, and therefore as we wish to keep in favour with the powers we invoke them in their own strains. The *rag* Saveri was that which the musician chose to begin with. It allows of the inclusion of unusual (to Western ears) intervals and the use of quarter tones. Through it he expressed humility, sorrow and praise. His art consists in improvisation. The greater the artist the greater number of permutations and combinations will he display of the selected group of notes which constitute the *rag*, but it will not be merely a *tour de force* of mathematics, it must also be an appeal to the emotions, an exposition of ideas, a revelation of

soul states. All these did Seshanna reveal through his creative power by the use of contrasting rhythms, by varieties of tone, by different methods of producing his sounds, by his changes in tempo and rhythmic figures. He has been a pioneer in introducing the use of double-stopping and harmonics in veena playing. His use of these embellishments was masterly in the extreme. But his greatest appeal lies perhaps in his power to make the plucking of one string produce as many as five different sounds lying around it, and it seemed to me the work of a magician how he could pick out just which of these tones he would use or omit. Indians have a deep love of the beauty of a tone in a veena. They do not seem to care about the beauty of the general tone of the singing voice as a rule, but they listen for and they appreciate to the extreme, the distillation of tone which a veena can give forth. To hear the King of Veena players create such purity of sounds, such intimacy of music, such expression of yearning beauty, to watch him caress the sound so that one forgot it was a material wire, but thought of it as a creature, to thrill with one's response to the sweetness, the fineness, the strangeness, the skill, was an experience worth long waiting for, an experience for ever to be remembered by me with gratitude. There were difficulties of technique which evidently were beloved by this master, such as the production of the same sound on consecutive frets of the veena each time the quality of tone gained being just slightly changed, long glissandos, exquisite trills, rapid contrasts of strident and soothing effects, unexpected intonations. And what a difference of atmosphere he moved in when he portrayed the sweetness of love in another morning rag, especially in

its upper registers! Throughout the recital he just played about with his juggler's balls of swarams, and transported his hearers far from the material world as he went through the Asevaveri, Todi, Dhamyaseveri and Sri Raga alapanas.

Before I left I enquired about his beautiful instrument which I found was 250 years old. Its ornate gourd has often been changed but its inlaid ivory tracings show its age and the silver cobra raising itself on the neck of the veena carries from its mouth a magnificent emerald which was presented to the Vidwan to commemorate the occasion when his playing drew forth a cobra which came and danced before him.

His pupils tell that on certain rare occasions Seshanna finds himself producing some tone for which he is ever seeking and at those moments he slips away into the unconsciousness of utter ecstasy, the tears flowing down his face. I believe it, for the purity of the man's life, his utter devotion to his goddess, his ceremonialism, proclaim him as a Priest-King, even as is his Royal Master, His Highness the Maharajah. Seshanna is no Bohemian of an artist, but a dedicated soul wedded to his art. And yet he is moody; people are inclined to say that his playing varies very much in excellence. That only supports my impression that he is an artist to his finger-tips. His son said that he gave me of his best, and I believe that a musician never performs so well as to another sympathetic and appreciative musician. I was therefore specially fortunate and the time I have spent on the study of the science of Indian music was amply recompensed, for without the intellectual understanding of the system I doubt if any Westerner will get a full measure of pleasure from a

hearing even of a king of Indian musicians. The Vidwan did not sing while he played and that made his music doubly pleasurable to me, as the method of voice production, and the harsh, unfeeling quality of South Indian singing repels me usually.

I was not surprised to find Mr. Seshanna much interested in Western music. He possesses a piano in his room, but it is in a defunct condition! He occasionally introduces accompanying chords in Western fashion into his compositions which is an innovation in South Indian music as employed by him. He does not speak English though he has a fair understanding of it. On my previous visit to Mysore I had been able to create quite an international *entente* through a musical exchange of performance between Herr Otto Schmidt, the Court bandmaster, a good violinist, myself a pianist and Irishwoman, and the famous Indian veena player. The old musician has a young mind and heart ever ready for fresh impressions and it was most interesting to watch the points in Western music which drew forth his appreciation, even as he must also have noted the effect on us of the characteristics of his playing. Such interchanges of musical culture are mutually valuable.

The future is assured of the remembrance of this outstanding musician, for his compositions, and his method of playing and his new developments of indigenous musical culture will be carried into the future by his many pupils, while his appearance is immortalised both in painting and sculpture. Two portraits of him were painted by the famous Ravi Varma, both excellent speaking likenesses of him as a young man. His devoted admirer, the painter Mr. K. Venkatappa, has also sculptured a bust of him which very successfully

perpetuates the musician as he appears today. This bust is placed in the music-room of the Jaganmohan Palace most fittingly. But it is in the hearts and memories of the many people whom his exquisite playing has ravished and inspired that his memory will be kept most green. I think myself lucky in having found already in India an ideal Poet, an ideal reigning Prince, an ideal Scientist, an ideal Painter, and now an ideal Musician, our King of Veena players, Vainikasikhamani Seshanna.

## CHAPTER XIX

### SCRIABINE

#### *A Bridge-BUILDER between East and West*

The real value of Scriabine's contribution is the marvellous beauty and spirituality with which his music is always imbued.

*A. Eaglefield Hull*

THE Lords of Destiny chose a Russian woman, Helena P. Blavatsky, to create to present a new world of philosophic thought to Western civilisation, to re-state the ancient and eternal Theo-sophia in modern times, and to link the East and the West spiritually, especially through India. The same Lords of Destiny chose a Russian man, Alexander Scriabine, to create a new world of musical expression evolved from the already developed musical system of Europe, to demonstrate in music the psychological states of mankind's unfoldment as taught by modern theosophy, and to unite India and the West musically.

Blavatsky was the founder of the Theosophical Society whose head-quarters are in India, and she embodied her teachings in 'The Secret Doctrine'. Scriabine was her avowed disciple and derived his inspiration for his greatest music from this theosophical classic. In his life and work he was a direct descendant of the Orphic and Pythagorean expression of the Theosophia in terms of music.

Too little is known by the general public about Scriabine, probably because his life was so short (1872-1915),



and because the World War obscured all things artistic in the years succeeding his tragic death. His life has many points of similarity with that of Shelley, and like the latter he raced through the gamut of emotional and mental experiences so rapidly that one feels that his Soul, knowing the short span of life allotted to him, packed it with a content that might easily have been spread over twice the period.

Heredity played a large part in Scriabine's make-up. He received his aristocratic elegance and grace from the Russian nobility of which he was a scion; his love of music and his pianistic skill from his mother who had been in her time a gold medallist of the St. Petersburg Conservatoire; and his taste for the Orient and for philosophy from his father. His mother died when he was two years old and his father having become a diplomat in Constantinople saw him rarely. He was brought up with the utmost love and care by his paternal grandmother and aunt in Moscow. He showed himself a child of creative genius from his earliest moments, and evinced a special love for the piano. His devoted women guardians gave him every freedom to develop on his own lines in an atmosphere of the greatest refinement and sweetness. It left its mark on his character for all through his life he was shocked and grieved by any manifestation of vulgarity or obtrusive manners and he abhorred the graceless and uncouth. He began his schooling at a military cadet school when he was ten, but combined his studies there with piano and composition lessons at the Moscow Conservatoire of Music. He was very delicate in health and this procured him many dispensations from the rigours of the military training though leaving him a

precision and sense of order which distinguished his later life and work. He showed himself unusually brilliant in all his studies. He became the pupil of the musician Safonov and the famous pianist-composer Rachmaninoff was one of his fellow pupils. After gaining the highest honours at the Conservatoire he set out on an extensive tour as a piano virtuoso sponsored by the great music publisher, W. P. M. F. Belaieff, who had divined signs of greatness in Scriabine's early compositions and super-excellence in his playing. When he played at that time in Paris a French writer described him as 'an exquisite nature equally great as a composer and pianist, an enlightened philosopher, all nerve and a holy flame.' Like Shelley he married early, was unhappy in that union and later found his soul-mate in one of his pupils with whom he lived ideally till his death. He maintained himself and his family by his music tours and by professional duties at the Conservatoire. In 1905 he came into touch with Theosophy which he read omnivorously and from which he derived inspiration for all his subsequent compositions. He travelled extensively from 1905 to 1910, living for short periods in Belgium and Switzerland where he composed much of his famous music. His own country called to him however and he settled down in Moscow and devoted himself to the productions of his compositions, to concert appearances, and to preparing preliminaries for the goal of his aspirations, namely the composition and production of 'The Mystery'. But the World War intervened. He turned his talents to giving concerts in aid of the suffering. After one of these he developed a boil in his lip. Despite all medical aid it brought on blood-poisoning which carried him off within a week's illness as if he

had been snatched out of life by the fire-elementals whom he had so often evoked by his musical mantrams.

Scriabine in the last twelve years of his life became a modern Columbus who set sail on an uncharted ocean of sound, after he had navigated all the known seas and shown himself a worthy captain of his craft. The first half of his creative period was devoted to his own interpretation of the existent major and minor modes, and of the current harmonic system, predominantly in Piano compositions, and to a considerable extent influenced by the creations of Chopin and Liszt. But from Opus 25 he started moving away from the old moorings, and as composition after composition flowed from his pen he drifted by sheer unexpected evolutionary impetus from one uncharted sea of tonality to another until in one of his final works there is not a major common chord to be found. He was no red-hot iconoclast yet he became a liberator of Western music from its overworked tonal system and consequent harmonies. His Will was so colossal that he was able to close off his mind from all the Western thought-forms, all the conventions, all the traditions of the music in which he had been merged, and which filled the emotional and mental thought-world around him. His was the titanic force which was able literally to build up a tone-world entirely of his own. He thought, heard, created entirely in terms of the following sequence of notes for his *Prometheus*, C, D, E, F sharp, A, B flat, C. And why did he choose this particular series? Because he found these sounds to be the natural series of overtones the chord on which he worked made from them (C, F sharp, B flat, E, A, D) proceeded entirely by fourths and was so synthetic that it contained every

form of triad, major, minor, augmented and diminished. Later he experimented with D flat instead of D natural in the above sequence, and finally added still further E flat instead of E natural, a change which brought him back within hailing distance of the minor tonality (in actual sound though not in theory) from which he had seemed to have emancipated himself. He had made his voyage round the tone world and found himself like the serpent swallowing his own tail. In his incorporation of the augmented fourth (F sharp) in his tonal systems he had swung right into the system of Indian music which is based on 72 fundamental scales of which 36 have the augmented fourth F instead of the perfect fourth. By these unaccustomed sound-sequences he created a music so new that its effects on Western musicians was as if they were listening to a new foreign language: many hated it, some were impatient with it, others either intuitionally or intellectually followed the evolutionary process of the matter and set to work patiently to learn the sounds of his new language, to free their minds from prejudice, to train their ears to hear and their eyes to read, and ended by rejoicing in the expansion of musical consciousness that became their reward. More and more, we prophesy, will Western musicians turn to his pioneer tracks for the tonal material of the future music, and in doing so they will find themselves in reality getting 'lux ab oriente'. Scriabine has given to the West new and unexplored worlds of sound material. We need no longer irk at the chains of the major and minor modes. As one of his biographers says 'the system which Scriabine adopted wholeheartedly created a veritable revolution in music. It includes the abolition of major and minor modes, the

dispensing with key-signatures, the complete acceptance of the equal temperament in tuning and so on.'

Scriabine's line of development in the harmonic use of his material is also striking. His early compositions show him as a dualist; in them a beautiful and lengthy melody has predominance and is served by an entirely subsidiary though always harmonic accompaniment of the ground-bass variety. As his experience grows, his harmonising arises from a contrapuntal harmony of a second melody to such an extent that harmony and melody are wedded as one; neither harmony nor melody exists independent of the other, appropriately enough, in the 'Poem of Ecstasy!' In his latest developments his melodies all become shortened until they are more like evocative mantrams than bel canto. The eight themes of this kind in the *Poem of Ecstasy* are like the eight arms of Shiva and of Saraswati and represent the creative energy which is the theme of the Poem. Scriabine effects the Divine Marriage in his union of melody and harmony, so unified do they become that they are, as it were, one equal-halved Being even as the inspiring Siva-Parviti temple-image in the Indian sculpture of the tenth century. To a unity also did he evolve the architectural form of all his compositions. In his Sonatas there are no separate movements. He was a conscientious formalist; but only the unified form would suit his purpose. Instead of the three or four distinctive movements of the classic Sonata form, there is but one movement in Scriabine's later Sonatas. The composition goes on from 26 to 30 pages, but as continuous compositions dependent for sustained interest on the contrast of his included themes and their psychological

content; not on the full cadences, the changes of theme and tempo of the water-tight compartment divisions of Sonatas like Grieg's, to mention a modern composer.

The word which gives the key to this great genius' whole work, aim and life is 'synthesis'. He was born with a passion for achieving Unity. He dreamt of securing a world-unity through Art, the eternal bond of all peoples and races. In his very first symphony written in 1900 he attempted to embody his ideas of universal, social, religious and philosophical unity. He was an idealist who 'was possessed by a tumultuous longing for the complete spiritual transformation of the world.' He was no 'art for art's sake' artist—he was a red-hot propagandist of a gospel by which the world would be saved. He dreamed ever of a synthesis of all arts, philosophy and religion. As life went on he became more and more self-confident of himself as the prophet, priest and producer of a new Mystery which should redeem the world. His spiritual growth led him to study many philosophical systems but none satisfied him as did the revelation of his fellow-countrywoman, H. P. Blavatsky. He became acquainted with her writings and with Theosophists in 1905 while living in Switzerland. He immediately became an ardent Theosophist and found his springs of inspiration in Theosophy from that day till his death in 1915. He pored over *'The Secret Doctrine'* and it is not too much to say that he set it to music. Its synthetic grasp of life's details satisfied his own interior and evolved nature. Its revelations of the correspondences of the planes of nature fascinated and thrilled him and led him later to experiments with colours and perfumes equated with his music texture. He had the

temperament and vision of the mystic; the science, powers and qualities of the occultist; the belief in ritualism and ceremonial of a priest; and the skill in beauty of an artist, poet, painter, musician, eurythmetist, sculptor and architect all in one.

A review of Scriabine's subjects alone is proof of the mystical character of his mind :—Tragic Poems, Satanic Poems, the Divine Poem (his third Symphony), the Poem of Ecstasy, the Poem of Fire and the Initial Act of the Mystery. The following is the programme of the 'Divine Poem' compiled by his wife: 'The first movement of the "Divine Poem" is the struggle between Man enslaved by a personal God and the free Man, God in himself. The latter is victorious, but when it comes to proclaiming his divinity he finds that his will is too weak for such a prodigious feat. He accordingly plunges into the delights of the sensual world. This is the second movement "Voluptes." Then from the bottom of his being there rises in him a sublime power that helps him to overcome his weakness and in the last movement "Jeu Divin" the liberated spirit gives himself up to the joy of a free existence.'

The *Poem of Ecstasy*, written three years after he had absorbed Theosophy, was a Western manifestation of the Play of Brahm. It represents the joy of unrestrained activity by the Spirit in its creation of worlds. At one time the composer had written in his diary: 'I am transported with the gladness that is in me. If the world could only partake of an atom of the joy that is mine, the world would suffocate in bliss.' He had indeed experiences of the Divine Ananda. But he was not content with only musical representation of the joy of cosmic activity. His genius, both intel-

lectual, mystical and musical, demanded that he should portray the whole process of Involution, Materialisation and Evolution. No other musician has essayed such vast projects, such linking of philosophic concepts to music. In that poem he includes the functions of Priest, Prophet and Artist. And even that did not find the limit for his titanic ambition. All his forces were bent to the expression of *The Mystery*, the mystical act of the union of Spirit and Matter in which 'all the finest creative powers of the race heretofore dismembered in the different branches of art would be united.' His dream was that there were to be 2,000 performers in it and no listeners or spectators. Each was to feel himself and herself a co-celebrant in a reflection of a cosmic ritual.

'All arts were to be represented and blended in an unprecedented manner. There was to be no simple counterpoint of musical parts, or even elements of one and the same art. It was to be a counterpoint of the various arts. Colours were to be in counterpoint with sounds, words with action and dancing. A melodic outline would not remain melodic, but might end by a plastic movement, a stanza of poetry might merge into a rainbow of colours to the background of the most divine perfumes. And all this was to take place in a temple far away in India, in a temple of the semi-globular shape reflected in water, so as to produce the whole globe—the most perfect of all shapes.'

Was it any wonder that the gods cried a halt to such anticipations of accomplishments reserved only for a distant future of which Scriabine shows forth as a forerunner, a John the Baptist? The spirits of fire, of fever, silenced his expression, symbolically starting



their ravages on his lip from which the poison of the malignant abscess spread to his whole face; and the agony and repulsion must have entered his very soul, before whirling him in haste into the mystery of the silence of Death.

Scriabine was not afraid of wedding psychology, philosophy, cosmogony, religion and magic to music. He started where his predecessor, Wagner, ended. He leaped ahead to the Divine Marriage, whereas his successors are now only crawling along or taking timid steps one at a time in his trail.

The amount of creative work accomplished by Scriabine in addition to his professional duties and piano-concert tours could not have been achieved in the space of fifteen years had it not been for the qualities of a trained occultist that he possessed both by Karmic heredity and daily training. Clear thought, clear expression, both in musical phraseology and in musical caligraphy, intense neatness and meticulous order, intense power of concentration which amounted to Yoga and gave forth its fruits, a fourth-dimensional sense of time which caused him to speak of the future as the accomplished present, an ever-growing attention to the laws of magnetic continence and occult silence, and an indomitable will coupled with a dynamic energy, marked this old soul. One must read his biographies to find the examples of all these qualities. He was a medium for the repulsive as well as the attractive. Several of his Sonatas are notorious for their demoniacal character. So evocative are they of evil influences that he avoided playing them himself. They were the expressions of the Dark Nights of the Soul which he in common with all mystics had to endure. While Scria-

bine's great orchestral works were maturing in his mind, their offshoots in the shape of piano sonatas and miniature works sprang up almost miraculously, products of a flash of inspiration. Thus the fifth sonata, a deed of wondrous magic, was composed in the course of several days, just as his mind was most intent on the *Poem of Ecstasy*. His adventures into the unknown of music and his power to maintain himself in that self-created world against the total thought-force of the whole musical world was a feat comparable only to the pioneering in another sphere of his Teacher, Madame Blavatsky.

Russia is undoubtedly the bridge between the Eastern and Western cultures, and it is interesting to note the fascination which India had for the great Russian musician. From the time of his introduction to Theosophy and Theosophists in Switzerland in 1905 Scriabine's looks turned towards India. It became the goal of all his secret aspiration as the only country holy enough for the setting of his Mystery. He read omnivorously all the available literature of India and experienced a keen delight in finding the resemblances between his own philosophy and that of the East. It was during his very much appreciated tour in England that another of the strange links was formed by him with India. He had originally looked on Switzerland as the ideal country for the production of the 'Mystery' but it was ousted by his dreams of India. While in England he was filled with the desire to visit India, he even bought a tropical hat and consulted practical men about the cost of building a temple in India where the mysterious service of his contemplated Mystery might be enacted. During the visit he was so much

impressed with England that he spoke of her in terms of the highest admiration, placing her in the vanguard of humanity on account of her moral worth and high type of civilisation. He rejoiced over the growing friendship between her and Russia, and in his thoughts even bestowed on her the loftiest distinction of which he was capable: 'After India', he said, 'England was the most suitable place for the service of the Mystery.' His musical link with India is very pronounced in that his later works are all composed in *melakartas* used by the India Rishi-musicians to convey the very same spiritual atmosphere as Scriabine sought to convey. Take for instance the scale of the *Prometheus*. It is the same as the Indian rag *Vachaspati*, meaning the Mother Substance of Sound, the basis of manifestation. Scriabine by his own studies, meditation and genius had evolved the same series of sounds through the extension of the use of the higher notes of the natural harmonics of any sound, and he believed it to be the true gamut of the sound basis of creation! His use of mantric musical phrases, of conflicting rhythms, of doubled or tripled tempo at the end of movements is very closely related to Indian music. Finally his belief in the correspondences of the arts as in his attempt to accompany his music with colours, and his ideal of creating one unified Art-form containing all the arts is exactly in accord with the teachings on artistic creation contained in the 'Vishnudharmottaram' a seventh century Sanskrit treatise on the art of painting. 'A work of art is for the fulfilment of Dharma (Duty) and the attainment of Moksha (Liberation).'

## CHAPTER XX

### THE FIRST INDIAN GRADUATE IN MUSIC<sup>1</sup>

There's music in the sighing of a reed,  
There's music in the gushing of a rill,  
There's music in all things if men had ears,  
The earth is but the echo of the spheres.

*Don Juan—Byron*

HAVE we not all noticed with a start of pleased surprise that when we wake in the morning a flower is in beautiful full bloom which we had noted overnight only as an insignificant bud? So it is with things that have come to light at the Senate meetings and convocation of the Indian Women's University held this week-end in Bombay (June, 1926). The vision of an experiment on new lines in the education of Indian womanhood arose twelve years ago in the mind of Professor D. K. Karve of Poona, the sannyasi of the cause of women; the foundation-stone of its materialisation was laid at the first Senate meeting of the Indian Women's University held in Poona exactly ten years ago; the where-withal for the performance of its period of construction, material and mental, was given some years later by that practical statesman of finance and wise patriotism Sir V. Thackersey in a munificent bequest; and today we have an evidence of its truly worthy and beautiful architecture.

Amongst the twelve young women who received on Sunday their Diplomas as Graduates in Art of the Indian Women's University was one who now stands as

<sup>1</sup> Printed in 1926.

the first Graduate in Music of any University in India. Mrs. Manjulabai Mehta, of Baroda, had taken Music as her optional subject for the Degree Course of the Indian Women's University and, having been strictly examined by the well-known musician and scientist of sound, Professor Bhatkande, was accorded by him marks above the standard required for passing the Degree examination in the subject of Music. This event is historic; it is significant; it breaks new ground; it is an efflorescence of a vital and worthy seed; it is a result in affinity with womanhood, its medium; it is a very weighty seal of worthiness on the scheme of education which Professor Karve and his co-workers have thought out as expressive of the nature of women along lines pre-eminently suited to the conditions of Indian life.

To realise its importance it must be remembered that although India is as a nation, intensely musical, and every important event in the individual's life is interwoven with religious music, yet educationally music has been the Cinderella of school and college subjects. Between the two stools of Western directed education and India's low regard for professional musicians, music had come to the ground. In every civilised country vocal music is a compulsory subject for boys and girls up to the age of fourteen. In secondary education practically every Western girl continues with music (usually an instrument) as an extra subject, and the Universities have Faculties of Music, with the courses and examinations conferring the Degrees of Bachelor and Doctor of Music. Throughout all India there is no Government recognised university which includes Music as a Degree subject.

The National University scheme, started by Dr. Beasant in the days before Education was a transferred subject, included a Faculty of Fine Arts and published in its Almanac a Degree Syllabus in Music, but the experiment of the whole scheme ended before any student appeared for the Music Course. There is agitation now going on to include Indian Music in the Madras University, the Mysore University and possibly the Hindu University of Benares; but no definite steps have as yet been taken. Quietly with little trumpeting of action, the Indian Women's University made it possible for women students to take certain of the Fine Arts as their subjects of specialised study and prescribed standards to be attained in them of a status equal to those set in the orthodox Universities whose schemes had been drawn up primarily from the standpoint of men's education.

Music is a subject loved by both men and women, one in which a small proportion of both men and women have special talent and can excel. Why then should not the established Provincial Universities give to their students the same opportunities of specialising in this Fine Art of Music as has been given by the Poona Women's University? The latter has set a successful precedent. It has done a signal service to the shrine of Saraswati. It has raised to University honours the degraded subject of music. It has given Indian girls a line of least resistance for their culture of talents which will adorn and purify social and home life. It has taken the first step towards the scholastic recognition of Art as a subject of educational value in Degree standard equal to history, economics, logic, mathematics and science! In some Provinces music is allowed as an

Optional for the School Final Leaving Certificate. It is noteworthy that practically all the students who select it come from the Indian States—Travancore, Mysore, Cochin, and now—in pre-eminence and giving the lead to India—Baroda. One remembers also that it was in Baroda the first all-India music conference was held. These things mark clearly the dawn of a new era in Indian Art, and it is linked up with a new era in the entire renaissance of the nation.

Institutions tied up with Government red-tape have a minimum of opportunity for making new experiments. History has constantly shown that reforms, expansions, variations arise from the vision and vigour of non-official explorers in the worlds of thought and experimentation, and that the new areas surveyed by these have gladly been included in the later official charts. This is the kind of pioneer work that has quietly been going on for the past ten years in the Indian Women's University. As Sir M. V. Joshi said in the Convocation address 'The University has long passed the stage of cold neglect, it has even passed the age of derision, it is now in the stage of gaining a gradual appreciation.' It is well to remember that its special aim is 'the rapid spread of secondary and higher education among Indian women' (two per cent is the appallingly low rate of literacy for women in India taken as a whole!) and the special means by which it seeks this end and differs from the established universities are (1) the use of vernaculars instead of English as the media of instruction and expression thus shortening courses by making the education more natural; (2) the inclusion of English only as a compulsory second language; (3) the admission to its examinations of privately trained students; (4)

the continuous ideal of patriotic service and self-sacrifice as the result of the education given; (5) the inclusion of domestic science, the Fine Arts, psychology and sociology as subjects specially suited to Indian women's careers.

The University now has schools and colleges affiliated to it using Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu. It has gradually increased in numbers though it has had the serious disadvantage of no Government recognition. Only when (working on its present lines) it has the seal of Government approbation will it be in a position of equality with the existing universities in its invitation to the parents to choose which type of education they prefer. No Government has a monopoly of the one and only right kind of education. Our educational authorities know that all kinds of systems should be tried out and then there will be a survival of the fittest. But these should have equality of opportunity during their periods of test and that equality should be the sanction and recognition of Government for any good results gained through the freedom of special institutions to try out new methods without the restrictions which arise from taking Government grants.

The twelve young women who received the Degrees on Sunday from their Chancellor, Sir Mahadeva P. Chaubal, have completed training on these lines and now go forth to serve their sisters in the same spirit as the organiser of their *alma mater*, Professor Karve, is constantly demonstrating.

Bombay Presidency has a splendid record of educational achievement. By this new extension of University status and the Fine Arts brought into the limelight by Mrs. Manjulabai Mehta's success it will further



increase its brilliant reputation and give a lead to all India.

It should perhaps be mentioned that Mrs. Mehta is the widowed daughter of Mrs. Sulochana, who has been the first woman mentioned in the Baroda Honours List where she received Honourable Mention and a medal for her work for social reform. One need not be pessimistic about India's future when there are such evidences about us of new life, new methods, new exponents.

## CHAPTER XXI

### MUSIC IN INDIA IN 1935

Every Hindu knows that a musician means a Bhagavathar—a man whose prime duty is to sing the praise of God to the lay people. Whatever is rhythmical tends to the permanent and constructive. The chief characteristic of the Universe is the Cosmic rhythm. Real rhythm in all its perfectness resided with God.

*The Principles of Layam*—K. Ramachandran

INDIA is the heart of the Orient. Out from India have flowed down the ages great streams of philosophy and religion, and in their train great arts and their influences, and culture and commerce. Into India have flowed other streams, streams primarily of races,—the Aryans, the Persians, the Greeks and to a lesser extent the Romans. The Aryans settled in this land of which the Dravidians were the original inhabitants; the following invaders mentioned returned to their homelands. But the next invasion, that of the Muhammadans, including the brilliant group of the Moghul rulers, not merely came and remained but also flowed through India to the East Indies and parts of the Far East. Following them came the various European rivals in colonisation, later consolidated triumphant into British Imperialism.

Between the Greek influence and the Muhammadan there had been a thousand years of Buddhism in which the arts had reached sublime heights. But in the following centuries there was a general decline of national life. The clash of ideals, religion, customs and styles between the Hindus and Muhammadans first bewildered and distracted national self-expression. England during

the last two hundred years brought with it such a glamour of science, successful materialism, and *force majeure*, and such a contempt for 'heathenism' and all its ways, that India's spirit (combined Hindu and Muhammadan) died down within itself and all that remained was seemingly a 'slave mentality.'

Later events have proved, however, that this has been but a temporary obscuration of the national genius. It has been but a period of dormancy, and of gathering strength for a new era of its ancient spiritual leadership.

Since 1910 there has appeared every proof of a renaissance of the great Indian spirit. When the sap rises in a tree it gives fresh life to every branch and leaf. So it is now with the arts of India. It would be difficult to say whether the new life first showed itself in the arts of India or in the political consciousness. Most likely they awoke together.

Thus we find that the new national song 'Bande Mataram' sung at the still young Indian National Congress of 1906 became a rallying cry similar to the 'Marsellaise',—an entirely new phenomenon in Indian public and musical life. But the turning point in musical history in India came in 1915 when the first All-India Music Conference was held in the Indian State of Baroda under the direct patronage of its ruler, His Highness the Gaekwar of Baroda.

This premier Royalty of India has throughout his reign liberally patronised all aspects of Indian art. He has created a model Museum and picture gallery, built very fine architecture in a new Palace, instituted the finest system of circulating libraries in India, and founded a School of Indian Music of a high grade. It

was therefore fitting that through His Highness the new impetus was given to the advancement of the art of Music which had so lamentably fallen on evil days.

This Conference was so inspiring that it stimulated the holding of an All-Indian Music Conference yearly since that date, held each time in a different city and area of India. It was just at the time I arrived in India that this first attempt was made to bring eminent musicians together and I well remember the interest it aroused in the Press. I could not realise at the time how abnormal and important it was, but as I moved about in the educational and musical worlds, I saw the reason, for I was shocked to find that Indian music, or music of any kind, was not included in school or college curricula. In other words I found that the influence of a foreign government had suppressed national artistic and emotional expression and had failed to realise how detrimental to New India was such a deprivation of training in its native culture. When then in 1917 an Indian-wide movement arose for 'National Education' and a National University was organised in Madras Presidency, as I had the honour of being a member of its Senate and Board of Studies, I pressed for the inclusion of Music throughout the whole educational career of the student. With the help of Mr. C. R. Srinivasa Iyengar of Madras and Mr. R. Srinivasan of Trivandrum, Travancore, I called together a Conference of the musicians living in Tanjore, the city in South India famous in the past and the present for its patronage of music and for the skill of its musicians. Our object was to secure their co-operation in drawing of a Course of study in Carnatic Indian Music from the Primary Grades in Schools right up to the

University Degree of Bachelor of Music. It was an ambitious scheme, but we were red-hot with enthusiasm, and we had the inspiration of the reform which had already been effected in Indian drawing and painting in Bengal in a similar direction by the efforts of Mr. E. B. Havell of the Calcutta School of Art and of the great Rabindranath Tagore in Shantiniketan, and his artist nephews in Calcutta.

As a result of that Tanjore Conference a complete Syllabus of musical studies was drawn up for yearly graded instruction and examinations to cover the acquisition of skill in the art of singing in the lower schools, and of singing, playing on two Instruments, composition, and a working knowledge of Western notation in the College Course. This historic Syllabus is to be found published in the Calendar of that National University for 1919. It caught the attention of several people influential in University circles. Professor Seshadri used it as a model for the Course in Music for the B.A. which some years after was compiled and followed by the Hindu University of Benares. It was a stimulant to the serious consideration of the importance of this subject by the Universities of Mysore and Madras. I had the honour of giving two University Extension Lectures in Mysore in 1927 to prepare the ground for the introduction of Music as an Optional subject in that State's educational programme. About the same time Madras University authorities appointed a Committee to investigate the practicability of making Music one of subjects of its Calendar of studies. I was one of the members of that Committee and felt it an honoured privilege, as a Bachelor of Music of the Royal University of Ireland

myself, to be the link between the academical institutions of music in the West and our attempts to place the art of Saraswati on honourable academic grounds in New India. Bombay Presidency had been doing its share during these same years in the service of the Muse. Well organised schools for the teaching of music had been founded in Bombay and were functioning successfully and publishing their own text-books and systems of instruction. The Indian Women's University in Poona, founded by Professor Karve, was actually the first University which in 1926 had the historic honour of granting the Degree of Bachelor of Music to the first student in India who had the opportunity of appearing for such a Degree.

The result of all this academic reform is that Indian Music now ranks in Madras Presidency as equal with all other subjects of study as an Optional or specialised subject throughout the whole course of studies for all Government schools and colleges. Madras Presidency has a population of over forty millions and its musical precedent is being followed in other Provinces. Consequent on the new attitude of Government to music in education students everywhere are turning their attention to the serious study of the art; a fine music school is a section of Annamalai University; summer schools for training teachers how to teach music in school classes are being held annually with remarkably successful results; and in 1933 the Madras University passed its first Graduate in Music with Honours, Mrs. Kalyani Sundaram, who is thus the first Graduate in Music from a Government institution in India. When one remembers that all music was taught orally and individually only until about ten years ago it will be

seen that this change to class teaching and the placing of Indian music within the purview of standardised examination is in the nature of a revolution. Side by side with this advance in Government programmes are the fine specialised Academies of Music in Bombay, Julunder, Amritsar, Lucknow, Baroda, Poona and Madras, and the Indian bands and orchestras upheld by the Maharajahs of Mysore, Travancore, Baroda, Rampur, Dharampur, Benares, Aundh and other Indian States.

The result of this increased interest in music is that the status of the professional musician in India is being raised. The teacher is being paid according to rates set by government standard similar to those given for other subjects; similarly there is increased appreciation, financial and otherwise, for virtuoso entertainers.

A new field for their services has been opened through the commercial enterprise with which Indian firms have taken up the manufacture of Indian gramophone records and the boom that is rising in the provision of Indian Music for the public by Broadcasting in large cities. The local Municipalities set up their own Broadcasting Studios and thus are able to provide music to their citizens at a number of open spaces in their respective cities at remarkably small cost to the city once the original outlay has been met.

Only five years ago saw the first attempts to provide Indian music for the masses, then on a very small scale, but much appreciated. Before then the only free public performances were those provided for the Western and Anglo-Indian residents by military brass bands which played nothing but Western music. Perhaps this is the reason why an Indian author writes 'West-

ern music as it strikes the cultivated Indian ear is pre-eminently martial, its other aspects do not satisfy us very much.' Indian people never listened 'to these bands, they cared nothing for them. But nowadays it is inspiring to see whole Indian and Muhammadan families, rich and poor, flocking to the parks, maidans, or marinas where theseq broadcasted concerts of Indian music are held several times a week.

Naturally all this new activity has brought about an amount of publication in the Press and in book form about music, and printed music itself, such as was inconceivable some years ago. For many years the printed classics were the 'Ratna Sangita' of Sarangadeva and the 'Raya Sarangini'. Then in English came the illustrated work of Maharishi Divenendrath Surindra Mohan Tagore, the 'Music of Hindustan' by Capt. Fox-Strangways, the 'Music of Southern India and the Deccan' of Capt. Day, and to my mind, the most valuable book of all for modern students, now out of print, 'The Regeneration of Indian Music' by A. M. Chinna-swamy Mudaliar, M.A., of Madras, who compiled in 1894 a 'delightful and easily followed exposition of Indian and Western music on the lines on which any Primer of the Western Theory of Music is displayed. He used English for his letterpress and Western notation for his illustrations and examples which makes his truly great service to Music available to students of music throughout India, since English is still the compulsory language in which all public examinations of schools and colleges must be answered. He was a devoted lover of Music and longed for the day when East and West would understand and appreciate each other's modes of musical expression. The latter half of



his big book consists of transcriptions of the Kriti of Sri Thyagaraja, the only instances that I know of them being in Western notation. There are also compositions of other singers, and an assortment of the vocal exercises which form the base of the practice and theory of Indian singing and rhythm. The tables of the classified 72 melakartas, also in Western notation, is a mine of information to a Western about an alien system of modes and their psychological content. Similarly his descriptions and illustrations of Western theory and practice will bring enlightenment to Oriental readers. The publication of this work was so expensive in those early days that its author's resources were bankrupted before half of his collected materials were put through the Press. I have seen the unpublished MSS. which are kept carefully in good preservation by his family in the hope that some day they will see the light. Fortunately the prose section was completed and forms still the most comprehensive parallel text-book existent of the Indian and Western systems. I do homage to his memory and acknowledge myself but a humble follower in his footsteps towards international understanding along the 'pathway of sweet sound'.

About the time he was doing this pioneer work of publication another South Indian, Muthuswami Dikshit, standardised the script symbols of Carnatic music by publishing a fine volume of Indian compositions in the Tamil and Telugu scripts. This book forms the basis of most of the school teaching of South Indian music. Similarly the Digambar Gandharva Vidyalaya of Bombay had brought out its own graded books of study in the idiom and nomenclature of North Indian scripts. This type of publication is now being added

to daily in a valuable way. Mr. Clements and Mr. K. Natarajan of the Western Philharmonic Society, published a scholarly collection under the title of 'The Ragas of Hindustan'. The former has also written several monographs on reforms that will be needed in Western notation in order to make it suitable for symbolising the microtones of Indian intonation and the differences of tone from those of the West brought about by the Indian method of natural tuning.

As the spirit of a people shows itself most transparently in its folk-song India will find itself under a debt of gratitude to Dr. A. Bake, of Denmark, who after a stay of a couple of years with Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, and during extended tours in all parts of India, has collected with infinite care and love over four hundred of the melodies of the folk and intends publishing them in Western notation. One remembers how it was such a collection of the Russian folk songs which gave Glinka, the Russian composer, his burning inspiration to use the indigenous material of his country for his great national operas, and that these formed a turning-point in the history of the music of that great people. With the rapid emergence of the Indian masses into self-consciousness and power their songs of the fields, the hearth-fires, the roads, the seas, the wells, will take on a new value and as the fallow soil of the art of music, bring forth a new rich crop. One can already see signs of this in the Gitams, the Bhajans, the National Songs which are being sung all over this vast country by the followers of Mahatma Gandhi. When the story of this time comes to be written the processions of little children, the Prabhatha Bheri, in the early dawn daily singing the nationalist invocations to

the Goddess of India to break the chains around her country, will stand side by side with the story of the Children's Crusade of the fourteenth century for gallantry and poignancy.

As the movement for political freedom has influenced the classical music so as to cause it to create an entirely new *genre* of songs that can be sung *en masse*, songs that stir the emotions of the people to face all kinds of self-sacrifice and suffering in their devotion to the liberation of their country from foreign domination, so also Western influence, which has brought its love for the building of large halls, has affected dramatic music.

The poetry of Rabindranath, Bharati, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya has broken new ground in subject-matter and literary form, and because all poetry in Indian languages is composed in simultaneous melody conveying the rhythm, it has followed that these artists have created also original modes in music. 'Art being a living organism, is bound to expand.' The urge of the age towards cinema productions and the enactment of India's dramas, which are always about three-quarters in song into so-called 'talkies' is also influencing the music of the classical drama, I cannot say always for good, but at least it makes it move and that is better than stagnation and fossilisation. All kinds of experiments are being tried out along the line of gaining increased volume of sound through the groupings of Indian instruments into orchestras to meet the need for filling large halls with musical accompaniments to the voices.

To fill the need for a type of music proportionate to the very large halls now being used for the production of Indian dramas, an instrument has become popular

which I can only describe as 'iniquitous', namely, the three-octaved harmonium. It was originally manufactured in a model which was played by the right hand whilst its bellows was manipulated by the player's left hand. It was imported into India from Austria where it is known as a beggar's instrument. But the glamour of being a Western instrument gave it an *entrée* into homes where indigenous music, forbidden because of the bad moral odour which had unfortunately attached itself to the professional musician. Its price was small, it took little room, it could be learnt by ear, it could be mastered in a far shorter time than any stringed instrument, and was much easier as its notes were already fixed. Alas, this, its advantage, is also its condemnation, for it contains no provision for the production of quarter-tones, and also its tuning is on the Western method unneeded by India, and ruining the perfect pitch which has for millenia been one of the assets of Indian musicianship. This little instrument has played a twofold part, it has been a boon and a curse, and is still exercising its baneful influence in deteriorating the quality of the ragams, though it popularises them and keeps them alive. This at one time beneficial service is now however no longer needed as music has resumed its high status obscured for several hundred years. One sees that the harmonium itself is being subjected to change to meet the needs of the times. It has now taken a upright stand unto itself like a Western church harmonium and is blown by foot action leaving both hands free. The result is that the melodic accompaniment is now played in octaves by the two hands. This increases the tone which is what the drama and cinema managers needed. It is also

providing the tempting opportunity to the players to indulge in some effects of primitive harmonisation, very similar to the steps by which western harmony developed. It has always been allowed by the Indian systems of music for fifths and fourths to form a kind of drone background in conjunction with the Indian equivalent for the key-note. One notices that now and then both major and minor thirds are introduced, which are an entire innovation. Another development of instrumental playing is the beginning of the use of harmonics in stringed instruments, in veenas and violins.

The fact that pupils are now being taught in classes with notation instead of one by one, as in the old method, is creating an interest in a type of Indian chamber music. Experiments are being made of a very important kind in combining Indian instruments into orchestras where contrasts are being made, not through harmonic effects, but through tone and colour combinations. Eventually I think India will create an orchestra distinctively its own, just as Java has done with its gamelin. Professor Deodhar of Bombay has combined twelve different instruments in his orchestra.

It is remarkable how easily the classical art of Indian dancing, occultly presided over by the hierarchy of Apsarasas, the genii of rhythm, has caught the imagination and favour of Western audiences. The Russian dancer, Pavlova, was one of the first, and the greatest, to perceive through her genius, what riches of aesthetic enjoyment India could give to the world through the Oriental conception of emotion expressed in movement and gesture. The present-day exponents of this art, Uday Shankar, and Mrs. Sookay have performed a double service in their successful dance tours in the

West, for through the lure of the dance they have also introduced Indian music in an acceptable form to Western ears. A well-known Hindu writer thus commented on Shankar's revelation of Indian dance and music after his New York success :

'They say in the West, "Music hath charms", but we say in India, "Music healeth". Yes, music healeth the body, invigorates the mind and sanctifies the soul. The mystic music of Shankar's Hindu Orchestra has indeed done much healing to the men, women and children of the sick continent of Europe as it has done also in distracted America.

'If one's eyes are cultured enough and his ears are delicate enough he cannot fail to notice that there are lofty phases of sheer loveliness in the dance art of Shankar when his feet dance on the very heart of music; his arms dance with the music that is hidden in the very soul of beauty and his eyes dance with the animated rays of the mystic music of the cosmos. At such moments of dynamic intensity and ineffable beauty, music itself becomes dance, and Uday Shankar becomes dance itself.'

It is not Indian music at its best any more than is the Blue Danube Waltz representative of high class Western composition, but all these impacts help to loosen the soil of ignorance and prejudice in which the moulds of our minds are set as members of diversified races, nations and continents. But in my judgment, the West is being more influenced by the music of the East than vice versa. One reason for this is that India in particular is visited by but few noted singers, players or orchestras from foreign countries, and of those even who come their choice of halls, their prices, etc., are

so pronouncedly Western in character that they do not attract the Indian musical public. There are probably good economic reasons for all this. We Westerners in India have to be deeply grateful to the Premyslavs, Mirovitch, Dawson, Hambourg, and a few others for nourishing us, but when Kubelik recently came and played in Cinema Halls which drew *Indian* audiences he got a magnificent reception, and he did more to open the ears of Indian musicians to the beauties and possibilities of foreign music than had been done by all agencies of Western music for twenty years before. His fiddle was an instrument common to the two races of hearers, and could be enjoyed apart from the barrier of language, a factor which prevented an Italian Operatic Company which bravely once toured India, from being able to secure as much popularity as the people really wished to give it. In this aspect of musical exchange the patronage of Indian Princes can be invaluable, but it is rarely exercised. A notable exception is His Highness the Maharajah of Mysore who gives his subjects the opportunity constantly of hearing the best Western music, and gives his Western visitors Indian music, often being present himself. He was the only patron who realised the international importance of the Centenary of Beethoven, and bade his Court Music-Master arrange a whole week's festival of the Master Musician's music and at those remarkable performances the audiences were Indians. In Bombay the Parsees, who are very musical, flock to any good performances of Western music, but as there are only 100,000 of them in all India it can be seen that they cannot be considered representative of the 360 millions of the Indian people. The presence of several reputable Indian musi-

cians at the first International Conference of Music held this year in Florence is significant of the moving outwards of the Art of Saraswati, the goddess of music. Press notices report that of these musicians Professor Rameshchandobriji and Pandit Oonkarnathji were received personally by Signor Mussolini, and that their performance at his palace made him and his friends enthusiastic over the beauties of the new melodies and musical forms to which they had listened. They also received ovations in Switzerland and London.

These cultural exchanges may be the heralds of an era of international harmony founded on mutual respect of peoples who appreciate soul values higher than tariffs, trade agreements, or boundary treaties. The Banner of World Peace must fly from a Standard fixed in the love of Comrades, comrades on the quest for Beauty, one of whose pathways is Sound which has filled the earth, and whose ancient custodian India has so honourably been. Now she renews herself to bear fresh gifts of art and philosophy to humanity, out of her upsurging springs of national self-consciousness which have brought about a new era in music development but on the ancient root, expressed thus by one of the newest writers on music in India, K. Ramachandran, M.A. : 'One can get to *moksha* (spiritual liberation, salvation) by singing in the proper way. Every Hindu knows that a musician means a Bhagavathar, a man whose prime duty is to sing the praises of God to the lay people. The Science of Music is founded entirely and without any qualification on a spiritual basis. The chief characteristic of the Universe is the Cosmic Rhythm.'



## CHAPTER XXII

### MUSIC IN DIFFERENT ASIAN COUNTRIES

Music, the beautiful disturber of the air,  
Drew near,  
Saying, Come with me into my country of air  
Out of the querulous and uncivil clay;  
Fling down its aching members into a chair,  
And come away,  
And enter the wide kingdom beyond despair  
Where beauty dwells unaltering, even such  
As my invisible body made of air  
Time cannot touch.

*The Flowering Stone*—George Dillon

IN 1929 I had the good fortune to attend a performance in Tokyo, Japan, of a Noh drama in the Peers' Theatre. At the time that Dr. Cousins and I received the invitation for the event from Baron I was not aware that that classical and ancient form of drama (played in masks) was opera rather than drama. My pleasure was intense when I saw the national Japanese orchestra, and found that one of the most famous of Japanese singers was playing the leading part.

It was my first experience of authentic Japanese music and it did not take ten minutes to reveal to me that I was in as new a world in music as I seemed to be in everything else in Japan. The tonality used was indescribable in its variety, its exotic quality, its dissimilarity to anything I had ever heard before. At times the method of voice production made one want to laugh, but that was only ignorance and lack of understanding of what effect was being aimed at, for the fine robust baritone could be as full and round and pure as any product of Milan Conservatoire. I was

lucky enough to be able to get a gramophone record of one of the songs of that opera by that very same singer and when I want to make myself humble about music I listen to it, and it never fails in its effect—'what realms of expression we of the Western musical dispensation have yet to discover and use!' We have nothing comparable to the intervals and nuances and slurs that singer produced. It was not an embroidery of melodic tracery, of filagree-like embroidery as is so often the Indian song. Its uniqueness lay in the depth and dignity of its amazing tonal progressions, its quality of utterly unusual sound. Yet it belonged to a system, it was not extempore, the same progressions were repeated, there was method in its madness. It and its accompaniment had to be heard to be believed or imagined.

The orchestra employed was small, not even twenty players. I remember one dainty Japanese lady played one of the drums and another played a flute. Then there were kottos, samisens, piccolos, and reed instruments like the oboe. There was some system of harmony used though the general line of accompaniment was a unison with the singer but with rhythmic effects from certain unusual percussion instruments which were entirely unique, many of which were distinctly unpleasant. But to me the general effect was an expansion of musical consciousness, and a desire to have an opportunity to study the laws of Japanese composition.

A miniature set of the usual Japanese musical instruments is always to be found for sale amongst the toys for the 'Girls' Day' Festival of Japan. I have not come across any such sets of the instruments of any other country.

As might be expected there are many pretty folk-songs and love ditties sung by the geisha. They are not so remote from other systems of music as is the classical music of old feudal Noh music. I found one which was not at all unlike a Hindustani song.

Young Japan, however, is steeping itself in European music. College students enroll themselves in Wagner Societies, they flock to concerts of European virtuosos, their modern composers write as badly in Western style as their modern painters paint in Western style.

I heard something also of the transitional music that is not mere imitation but influenced by Western methods. A drawing-room performance was given for me of a cantata with the original soloists, but only a double piano accompaniment and a miniature chorus in place of the 250 members of choir and orchestra which had performed the composition in the Tokyo Academy of Music. The subject was 'The Search' by J. Krishnamurthi of India, the performers were Buddhists with the exception of the leading soloist, a tenor, who was a Christian, and the music was a cross between 'Parsifal' and Vedic chanting! This is typical of the gropings in the search of new Japan for a renaissance of her arts to meet her new world contacts and consciousness.

Some musical performances I heard in the ports of China showed me that in that vast and ancient land was a realm of scientifically evolved emotional expression in sound utterly different from Japan, India or Europe. An American composer friend of mine, who has spent considerable time in China, considers its classical music as the most profound art of the Far East, but what I heard and was able to secure through

gramophone records from the local shops reveals an unnatural and falsetto type of voice production with amazingly grotesque effects to Western ears, and in instrumentalism a predominance of dulcimer effects and technique. When one remembers how utterly unlike the music of their respective countries are 'The Geisha', 'The Mikado' and 'Indian Love Lyrics' it may be that I also failed to sense the soul of China in those authentic compositions I happen to have heard or possess in the form of records.

It is given to few Westerners to hear the music of mysterious Tibet. Dr. Somervell of the Everest Expedition managed during his travels to collect a number of the songs he heard there and they have some unique qualities. I was so lucky once in Darjeeling as to witness a procession of Buddhist men and women carrying the Holy Books of Tibetan Buddhism around that town in an annual act of blessing, and the music of the 'band' which headed the procession, and in which most of the instruments were played by Tibetan Lhamas, was amongst the most weird and impressive I have ever heard. There were no singers. There were four or five different kinds of drums, plaintive reed instruments, ten-foot bronze and copper trumpets carried horizontally with a small boy bearing the large end, and great conch shells. The depth and richness of tone from those trumpets was like the sound of the Earth itself and that of the conches as the moan of the Great Waters of the World. It was elemental sound woven into the aspiration of the children who inhabit this planet. Coming unexpectedly upon this deeply religious procession of musicians and monks, all in ceremonial garments which reminded one more of a fairy story than

anything else, and trying to 'tune in' to that extraordinary music with sublime Kinchinjunga towering above us 28,000 feet in its eternal snows, was an experience never to be forgotten, and was also a new revelation of the Art of Music. That music was as different from Caesar Franck's Symphony as is Broadway Jazz but in a totally opposite direction. To get even a touch of all these different reactions from what individual countries are inclined to think is their only 'natural' kind of music, is one of the Extension Courses of the University of Foreign Travel.

Until a few years ago only the Dutch people knew of the wealth of music of a very individual character which their East Indian islands contained. A great impression had been made at the famous French Exposition of Eiffel Tower fame by the orchestra of East Indian people whom the Dutch had brought to that Exposition in connection with their national exhibit. It is part of the legends of Claude Debussy's Life and the development of his genius that he used to haunt the Dutch Section so as to drink in and study the music of this ancient people of Batavia, and the surrounding islands. One of these, Bali, has come into the limelight during the past ten years since the publicity exploiters of America got hold of its supreme art of the dance, the Shadow Play (Wyang) and its gamelin orchestra.

Motoring back one day in December, 1925, from Madras City to Adyar, its beautiful suburb seven miles out, I found myself passing a long procession of bullock carts laden with weird-looking chests, and packing-cases, evidently of purely Oriental origin, and I wondered and wondered what might be their contents. A couple of days later the mystery was solved when I

made the acquaintance of the band of twenty instrumentalists, singers and dancers who had been sent by one of the Indonesian Princes to the Jubilee Convention of the Theosophical Society at its Headquarters in Adyar. This nobleman is a Theosophist and his gesture of appreciation of the Society was his loan of these ancestral musicians of his family to the land from which they had received the *Ramayana* whose story they tell in music and dance. Truly a royal gesture! The Indonesians are themselves Muhammadans thus it is doubly remarkable that they have found their Art inspiration in the sacred scripture stories of the Hindus.

The strange packing-cases had deposited great brass gongs, brass bowls of graded sizes, arrangements of the dulcimer of xylophone type but made of large graded sections of metal and wood which were mounted something like a harmonium. Then there were also arrangements of bowls of water and bells, and several reed instruments. The orchestra played without printed music, and had no special conductor. I heard that they had then no notation for their music, that it had been passed down the centuries by aural tradition. As in Indian music, there is no modulation in Javanese music, and the range of sounds used is limited. Neither are there ragas or modes. The music seems to be entirely pentatonic, as on the black notes of a piano or harmonium, or as what is called Mohana Ragam in South Indian music, whole tones, without a fourth or seventh. It is peculiarly considered the medium of the melodies of nature, and certainly the music played by the gamelin made one think of winds among trees, the dripping of water, fairies in moonlight, magical evocations, a detached and non-human lack of passion, and

yet great peace and pleasure as when all the earth smells good. The harmony with which it abounds is quite different from Western developments, but as I had no means of communicating with these Javanese artists I could not find its theoretical basis. There are a number of good gramophone records available of gamelin performances, but without sight of the performers, their beautiful costumes, interesting instruments, and impassive oriental features the music loses lustre even as a picture without appropriate mounting and lighting.

Because of the Muhammadan culture which is inter-linked with the Javanese music there is a resemblance in its melody with the music of Northern India (Hindustani music it is called), and with the Arabian and Persian melodies, but the similarity does not extend to the instruments nor to the wide range of tonality and the nuances of intonation,—quarter tones and one-third tones which prove so ravishing in these latter.

India is indeed a mother of music as well as a mother of religions—perhaps indeed because the two subjects are so inter-related in human psychology, religion being the emotional nature turned inwards towards causes and music being the emotional nature turned outwards towards creation as a means of self-immortalisation.

The music of India has been treated by itself in other chapters because its antiquity, its scientific development, its wealth of material and its importance, as a source from which much of the music of the Far East sprung in the wake of Buddhism, demand individual consideration.

But as the music of North India has become so inter-fused with the melody, romance and culture of the Near East through the presence there of the great

Mogul dynasty for four hundred years, it is easy to pass through that channel of song to the heart of Persia, Assyria, Georgia, Arabia. Everywhere there is melody to be heard as one travels through these countries. Everywhere the soul discharges its hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, praise and devotion through the overflow pipe of the Celestial Art. Everywhere is heard the human singing voice which is Queen of music in the Orient, Near or Far. I did not remain in the Near East long enough to find out on what lines their melody was based: whether it was a scientific system as in India or an instinctive and traditional development only. The songs are undoubtedly beautiful and deserve study. Claude Debussy captured some of their fascination in the haunting theme in the 'Apres-Midi d'une Faune.' Rimsky-Korsokoff wove the Arab melodies into his Operas, notably in the music of the Circassian Princess in 'Le Coq d'or'. It seems probable that Russia will be the best exponent of these two great cultures of music to one another, the Individualistic and the Collective, the melodic and the harmonic, the art of the wide lonely spaces, where the emotions of wandering, loneliness, simplicity, Nature, romance and religion make a man or maiden sing to themselves, to one another or to the Unknown God; and the other art of a group to entertain a crowd, the art of organisation, of scientific invention, of problems, of reproduction, of ceremonial, of story, or of Nature, of complexity. Comparisons are odious, but it remains true that the Art of Music is as it were One Body, and it is the lot of each nation and also of each continent to develop different muscles and different organs of that One Body.



In 'listening in' mentally to the many different systems of musical expression through which each in its own way speaks the language of the human soul my heart is uplifted by the thought of the wealth of aesthetic enjoyment and spiritual liberation which the musicians of the future will have at their command when time and space will have been practically annihilated by air-transit and radio-broadcasting. I feel that we are at the beginning of a new, truly international era with every nation bringing gifts of song to the Commonwealth of the single human family. We know now that all this music is ever-present around us available to us by science. In this wonderful realm of music also our taking of what is there will impoverish no one. Because of the enrichment given me by the various types of music of the various countries in Asia I feel excited and enthusiastic over the deepening and expansion of world music that is certain to follow world-broadcasting and easy world-travel. Artists, architects, and sculptors of the West acknowledge their indebtedness to the Orient for inspiration in colour, design, building, composition. It still remains for the Occident to feel the equally rich and pure influence of the expression of the Orient in the realm of Music. As Pavlova made the Russian Ballet and Russian genius for Dance known to the world, as Uday Shankar is today similarly gaining the enthusiasm of the world for the beauty, power and purity of Indian classical dancing, so is the great personality being demanded, being waited for, to capture the ear of the world by his or her genius in singing the Soul of Asia to a world that is, after satiety, aching for the simplicities of the individual communing with the Beloved, be it God, the

gods, Nature, or a fellow-being, untrammelled by choirs or orchestras, accompaniments, notation or even words. The material is lying about everywhere in Asia just awaiting the psychological moment for its most effective and most inspiring outpouring upon the musicians of the world and self-consciously to the Asians themselves even as has been the enrichment of all lovers of literature and spiritual thought by the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. I would like this little collection of articles on music viewed internationally to be a herald of that new era.